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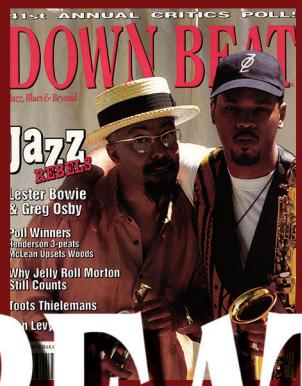
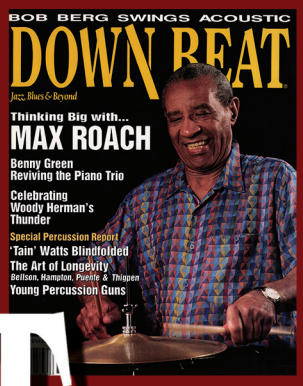
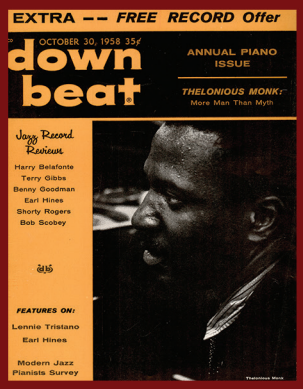
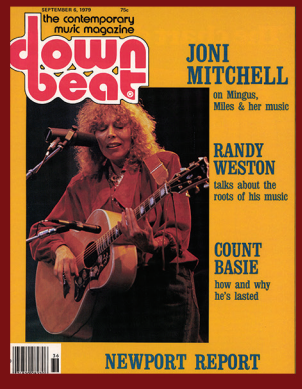




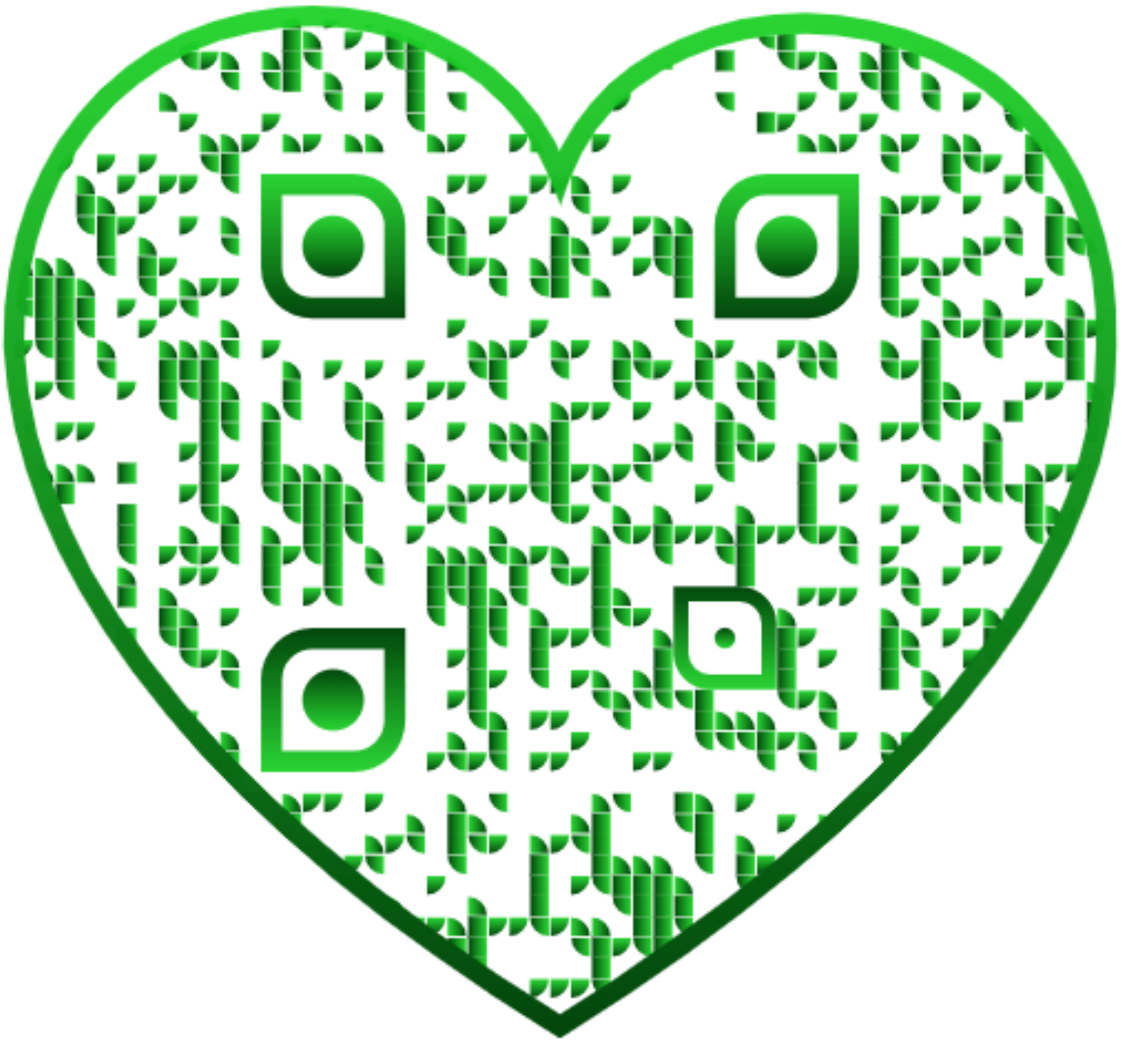




DOWNBEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

90th Anniversary ISSUE



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Duke Ellington receives his plaque after being inducted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame in 1956. Presenting the award are Toshiko Akiyoshi and Lawrence Berk, founder of Berklee College of Music (then the Berklee School of Music).

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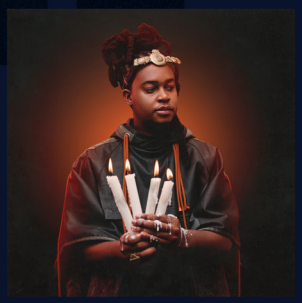

LINDA SIKHAKHANE
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South African saxophonist's celebratory offering features **Nduduzo Makhathini** on piano, **Zwelakhe-Duma Bell le Pere** on bass & **Kweku Sumbry** on drums.

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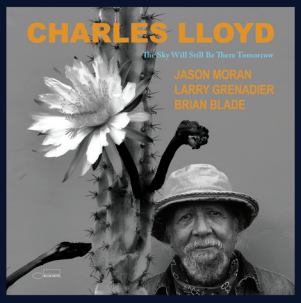
ECHOES OF THE INNER PROPHET

Saxophonist offers an introspective musical voyage that explores her spiritual journey featuring **Lage Lund**, **Fabian Almazan**, **Pablo Menares** & **Kush Abadey**.



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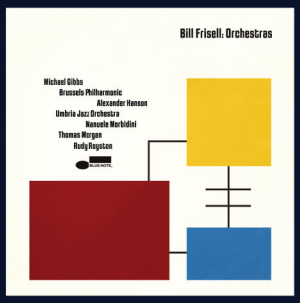

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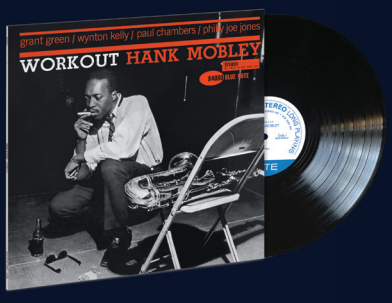

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"That's what I call jujitsu music," said Louis Armstrong of Shorty Rogers' music. "You better give him one star."

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVE

The Blindfold Test

Satch Mellows A Little On Bop, But Only A Bit

By Leonard Feather

Several years ago, Louis Armstrong stirred up a little sandstorm in jazz circles when he began to berate bebop, as it then was called. His criticisms — taking the form of private comments, public interviews, official pronunciamentos — invariably proclaimed that the newer noises in jazz were sounding its knell.

Five years have passed since the contest of words was at its height. Satchmo and the music he condemned are still around, both healthy and vital, thoroughly capable of finding mutual Lebensraum. Louis, as ever, retains his love for the old and most of his resentment for the new; but he has mellowed a little, as I discovered on interviewing him out at his Long Island home.

This Blindfold Test took place while Louis was getting ready for work. Placing the phonograph and tape recorder strategically equidistant from bedroom, bathroom, and hall, I documented his comments as he listened closely and talked freely.

The visit produced enough material for two Blindfold Tests, the first of which is reproduced below. Louis was given no information, before or during the test, about the records played for him.

1. Les Brown
"Stomping at the Savoy" (Coral) Ronnie Lang, alto; Don Fagerquist, trumpet: Tony Rizzi, guitar.

Who is that? Is that Basie or Sauter-Finegan? I like it, as far as swing goes. … I like all swing music, but it got kinda complicated there. The arrangement was heavily loaded. I notice they're trying to bring some of those things back.

I like the solos, as far as — but they remind of the bop kick, you know. Nothing against it, but, I don't know, I'll take Benny Carter or one of them cats; or Georgie Auld, since I played with him on the tour last year, I like his solos.

When Benny Goodman copped out, we got together and fixed up a finale that was really jumping. Benny came back and just stood there — he didn't have to play!

This record, though, it won't make you stand on your head. Not from the way music's played today.

Let's give it, ah, ordinary rating — two stars.

2. Eddie Condon
"Squeeze Me" (Columbia) Eddie Miller, tenor.

Four stars, boy, four stars! I, Louis Armstrong, like everything about that! You can dance by it, you can talk while it plays, you can understand it while it plays. I like the tune, too — the one we used to call "The Boy in the Boat." Sounded like Eddie Condon's band.

3. Shorty Rogers
"Morpo" (Victor) Milt Bernhart, trombone.

That's what I call jujitsu music. You better give him one star. That's what causing music today to go bad. I'll tell you why. Didn't any one of those guys end up their solo on the nose. It's not a matter of being old-timey, but, shucks, we can get too damn

modern, you know? And that's just what it is that spoiled 52nd Street and a whole lot of places that we used to have. Now you take that trombone player in there. He wouldn't move a crowd of people that pays money; the people that spend money wouldn't go to hear that but once. I didn't like none of the solos, because they tried to be too out of this world. They're played for musicians.

That's what happens with that bop, all that weird stuff, up there at Minton's. ... Now the generation that's going to follow Dizzy is going to catch hell, 'cause Diz is an old hustler, he's an old-timer, he's a good musician. And a showman.

But this generation that's coming up, shoot, they don't have no chops within six months' time. No, man, there's no way you can preserve yourself with that kind of music. And that's not even progressive jazz!

4. Duke Ellington
"Stormy Weather" (Capitol) Willie Cook, Ray Nance, Cat Anderson, trumpets.

Yeah, you can put five on that one for me. Well played … even to them trumpets, they were never scared of the notes. You take the average trumpet, they've got to put a cup over their horn when they've got high notes and things, for protection, like a money-clip or something.

Everything was good here, in my estimation; the boy played good horn. And the arrangement, you could follow everything they did. It sounded like Duke. Was it Duke?

5. Jelly Roll Morton
"Black Bottom Stomp" (Victor, 1926). Morton, piano.

Put four on them. They played it too fast for five stars, they couldn't keep up with it. The trumpet player attacked his notes like Joe Oliver and Mutt Carey. The piano, if that ain't Buster Wilson, it's that other boy that went to California in the early days — it's one of the old-timers. It could be Harvey Brooks. Or Freddie Washington? From New Orleans? Well, the tune jumps, but they play it so fast, other than a concert, you just could stand up and listen to it, but that other number you played, you can listen, you can dance, you can talk … this is worth a hell of a rating over that bop stuff, but not a five-star rating for a cat that would like to dance by it. Give it four.

6. Chet Baker
"Imagination" (PacificJazz)

Sure is a perfect record; the tone is beautiful, but what puzzled me is how he can get in such a low register. In a way he sounded like Red Rodney, that's the way he used to play with Charlie Parker at Bop City. Well, it's a solo, and a solo has got to be appreciated, if it's played right.

The man takes a chorus and don't miss no notes at all. You got to give him credit. That's what I tell my band all the time, I say, "What good is jumping out there, and you think you're gonna kill 'em, and you make five bad notes right off, and then make the rest of them good?" That wound is still there! All the people give 'em that applause, but they're still thinking about the bad notes, man. ...

Give him four stars.

7. Ray Anthony
"Moonlight Serenade" (Capitol) Anthony, trumpet.

Got to give that five. Any time a musician can balance himself and play a straight and a beautiful lead like that, you know — you don't hear it every day. Very few musicians can carry a lead. And very few can play slow and still swing. And that's why I say it's either Bobby Hackett or some son-of-a-gun who's been studying him awful deep. Because that's the way Bobby is always playing. He's a fine musician, plays guitar, too; he knows them chords, makes them pretty variations. Behind "Pennies from Heaven," when I sang it at the Town Hall concert, the one they put out on the Victor album, he would fill in so pretty.

I like this band, too; but I don't think it's Glenn Miller's band, because I listened for one little thing in there. The one Glenn made of this — I've got it on tape, but trying to find it now is like looking for a needle in a haystack, because I changed my filing system all around. But there's one thing that I miss that comes from the piano, a thing Glenn's piano player did that killed me!

But this goes for five anyway.

8. Roy Eldridge
"Rockin' Chair" (Clef). Oscar Peterson, Hammond organ.

That ending — the high note — well, I know it's Roy Eldridge. You know I'd hit that, right out of bed — just get right out of bed, give me a cup of coffee, where is it? I'd hit it.

But Roy is the only one that's going to have the nerve to hit that note like that. Now if it ain't Roy, it must be his boy, ha ha ha!

But it's got to be Roy Eldridge. That organ background is beautiful. And the boy played the solo on his horn just like Heifetz would — well, I wouldn't say like Heifetz, but you take a great man, even a fiddler like Joe Venuti. Roy has that musicianship.

Four stars. **DB**

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

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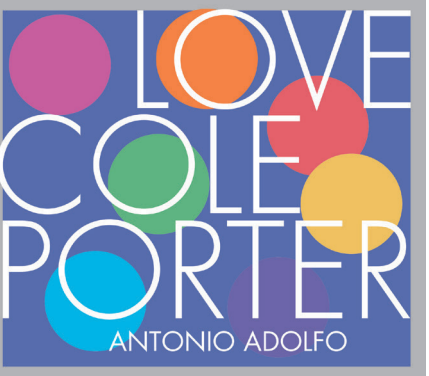

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DOWNBEAT ARCHIVE

"Some guys said, 'Here's bop,'" said Charlie Parker in 1949, shortly after the creation of bebop. "Wham! They said, 'Here's something we can make money on.' Wham! 'Here's a comedian.' Wham!"

Charlie Parker: 'Bop Is No Love-Child of Jazz'

By Michael Levin and John S. Wilson

New York — "Bop is no love-child of jazz," says Charlie Parker. The creator of bop, in a series of interviews that took more than two weeks, told us he felt that "bop is something entirely separate and apart" from the older tradition; that it drew little from jazz, has no roots in it. The chubby little alto man, who has made himself an international music name in the last five years, added that bop, for the most part, had to be played by small bands.

"Gillespie's playing has changed from being stuck in front of a big band. Anybody's does. He's a fine musician. The leopard coats and the wild hats are just another part of the managers' routines to make him box office. The same thing happened a couple of years ago when they stuck his name on some tunes of mine to give him a better commercial reputation."

Asked to define bop, after several evenings of arguing, Charlie still was not precise in his definition.

"It's just music," he said. "It's trying to play clean and looking for the pretty notes."

Pushed further, he said that a distinctive feature of bop is its strong feeling for beat.

"The beat in a bop band is with the music, against it, behind it," Charlie said. "It pushes it. It helps it. Help is the big thing. It has no continuity of beat, no steady chug-chug. Jazz has, and that's why bop is more flexible."

He admits the music eventually may be atonal. Parker himself is a devout admirer of Paul Hindemith, the German neo-classicist. He raves about his *Kammermusik* and *Sonata for Viola and Cello*. He insists, however, that bop is not moving in the same direction as modern classical. He feels that it will be more flexible, more emotional, more colorful.

He reiterated constantly that bop is only just beginning to form as a school, that it can barely label its present trends, much less make prognostications about the future.

The closest Parker will come to an exact, technical description of what may happen is to say that he would like to emulate the precise, complex harmonic structures of Hindemith, but with an emotional coloring and dynamic shading that he feels modern classical lacks.

Parker's indifference to the revered jazz tradition certainly will leave some of his own devotees in a state of surprise. But, actually, he himself has no roots in traditional jazz. During the few years he worked with traditional jazzmen, he wandered like a lost soul. In his formative years, he never heard any of the music that is traditionally supposed to inspire young jazzists — no Louis, no Bix, no Hawk, no Benny, no nothing. His first musical idol, the musician who so moved and inspired him that he went out and bought his first saxophone at the age of 11, was Rudy Vallée.

Tossed into the jazz world of the mid-'30s with this kind of background, he had no familiar ground on which to stand. For three years he fumbled unhappily until he suddenly stumbled on the music that appealed to him, which had meaning to him. For Charlie insists, "Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn."

Charlie's horn first came alive in a chili house on 7th Avenue between 139th and 140th Street in December 1939. He was jamming there with a guitarist named Biddy Fleet. At the time, Charlie says, he was bored with the stereotyped changes being used then.

"I kept thinking there's bound to be something else," he recalls. "I could hear it sometimes, but I couldn't play it."

Working over "Cherokee" with Fleet, Charlie suddenly found that by using higher intervals of a chord as a melody line and backing them with appropriately related changes, he could play this thing he had been "hearing." Fleet picked it up behind him and bop was born.

Or, at least, it is reasonable to assume that this was the birth of bop. All available facts indicate this is true. But Parker, an unassuming character who carries self-effacement to fantastic lengths, will not say this in so many words. The closest Charlie will come to such a statement is, "I'm accused of having been one of the pioneers."

But inescapable facts pin him down. He says he always has tried to play in more or less the same way he does now. His earliest records, which were cut with Jay McShann in 1940 (on Decca), back him up on this. They reveal a style that is rudimentary compared to his present work, but definitely along the same lines: light, vibrato-less tone; running phrases, perkily turned; complex rhythmic and harmonic structures.

From 1939 to 1942, Charlie worked on his discovery. He admits he thought he was playing differently from other jazzmen during this period. Indicative of his queasiness about saying who did what before with which to whom is his answer to our query: Did Dizzy also play differently from the rest during the same period?

"I don't think so," Charlie replied. Then, after a moment, he added, "I don't know. He could have been. Quote me as saying, 'Yeah.'"

Dizzy himself has said that

he wasn't aware of playing bop changes before 1942.

Whether he'll admit it or not, the calendar shows that Charlie inaugurated what has come to be known as bop. In some circles he is considered to be the only legitimate boppist.

"There's only one man who really plays bop," one New York reed musician said recently. "That's Charlie Parker. All the others who say they're playing bop are only trying to imitate him."

Despite his unwillingness to put anybody down, a slight note of irritation creeps into Charlie's usual bland mien when he considers the things that have been done by others in an attempt to give his music a flamboyant, commercial appeal. The fact that Dizzy Gillespie's extroversion led the commercially minded to his door irks Charlie in more ways than one. As part of Dizzy's buildup, he was forced to add his name to several of Charlie's numbers, among them "Anthropology," "Confirmation" and "Shaw 'Nuff."

Dizzy had nothing to do with any of them, according to Charlie.

As for the accompanying gimmicks that, to many people, represent bop, Charlie views them with a cynical eye.

"Some guys said, 'Here's bop,'" he explains. "Wham! They said, 'Here's something we can make money on.' Wham! 'Here's a comedian.' Wham! 'Here's a guy who talks funny talk.'" Charlie shakes his head sadly.

Charlie himself has stayed away from a big band because the proper place for bop, he feels, is a small group. Big bands tend to get overscored, he says, and bop goes out the window. The only big band that managed to play bop in 1944, in Charlie's estimation, was Billy Eckstine's. Dizzy's present band, he says, plays bop, [but it] could be better with more settling down and less personnel shifting.

"That big band is a bad thing for Diz," he says. "A big band slows anybody down because you don't get a chance to play enough. Diz has an awful lot of ideas when he wants to, but if he stays with the big band he'll forget everything he ever played. He isn't repeating notes yet, but he is repeating patterns."

The only possibility for a big band, he feels, is to get really big, practically on a symphonic scale with loads of strings.

"This has more chance than the standard jazz instrumentation," he says. "You can pull away some of the harshness with the strings and get a variety of coloration."

Born in Kansas City, Kansas, in 1921, to a family that was in relatively comfortable circumstances at the time, Charlie moved with his parents to Olive Street, in Kansas City, Missouri, when he was seven. There were no musicians in his family, but Charlie got into his high school band playing baritone horn and clarinet. He had a special fondness for the baritone horn because it helped him win medals awarded to outstanding musicians in the band. Not that he played the horn particularly well, but it was loud and boisterous and dominated the band so much the judges scarcely ignore it.

In 1931, Charlie discovered jazz, heavily disguised as Rudy Vallée. So that he could emulate Rudy, his mother bought him an alto for $45. Charlie settled on the alto because he felt the C melody wasn't stylish and a tenor didn't look good. His interest in the alto was short-lived, however, for a sax-playing friend in high school borrowed it and kept it for two years. Charlie forgot all about it until he was out of school and needed it to earn a living.

It was back in his school days, he says, that his name started to go through a series of mutations that finally resulted in Bird. As Charlie reconstructs it, it went from Charlie to Yarlie to Yarl to Yard to Yard-bird to Bird.

After his brief exhilaration over Vallée, Charlie heard no music that interested him, outside of boogie-woogie records, until he quit high school in 1935 and went out to make a living with his alto horn at the age of 14. As has been mentioned, he was under the influence of none of the jazz greats. He had never heard them. He was influenced only by the necessity of making a living, and he chose music because it seemed glamorous, looked easy and there was nothing else around.

This primary lack of influence continued as the years went by. The sax men he listened to and admired — Herschel Evans, Johnny Hodges, Willie Smith. Ben Webster, Don Byas. Budd Johnson — all played with a pronounced vibrato, but no semblance of a vibrato ever crept into Charlie's style.

"I never cared for vibrato," he says, "because they used to get a chin vibrato in Kansas City (opposed to the hand vibrato popular with white bands), and I didn't like it. I don't think I'll ever use vibrato."

The only reed man on Charlie's list of favorites who approached the Bird's vibrato-less style was Lester Young.

"I was crazy about Lester," he says. "He played so clean and beautiful. But I wasn't influenced by Lester. Our ideas ran on differently."

When Charlie first ventured onto the music scene in Kansas City, the joints were running full blast from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Usual pay was $1.25 a night, although somebody special could command $1.50. There were about 15 bands in town, with Pete Johnson's crew at the Sunset Cafe one of the most popular. Harlan Leonard was in town then, along with George Lee's and Bus Mosten's little bands. Lester Young, Herschel Evans and Eddie Barefield were playing around. Top local pia-

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nists were Roselle Claxton, Mary Lou Williams, Edith Williams and Basie.

Charlie spent several months picking up on his alto. On Thanksgiving night, 1935, he got his first chance to play for pay when he was wound up with a small group of others to do a gig in Eldon, Missouri. He was offered $7 for the night, not because he was any good but because practically every musician in Kansas City was working that night and the guy who hired him was going crazy trying to find men to fill the date. Driving to Eldon, they had a crackup. Two of the men were killed, and Charlie got out of it with three broken ribs and a broken horn. The man who had hired him paid his medical expenses and bought him a new horn.

'The beat in a bop band is with the music, against it, behind it. It pushes it. It helps it. Help is the big thing. It has no continuity of beat, no steady chug-chug. Jazz has, and that's why bop is more flexible.'

In February 1936, Charlie started out for Eldon again with another group, and this time he made it. The rest of the combo was a shade older than Charlie. J.K. William, the bass player, was 72. The rest were in their 30s and 40s. Charlie was 15. But, as the baby of the group, he got a lot of attention and advice. He had taken guitar, piano and sax books with him and set about learning to read seriously. The pianist, Carrie Powell, played for him and taught him simple major, minor, seventh and diminished chords.

By the end of the Eldon job, in April, he could read fairly well but not quickly. He went back to Kansas City and got his first club job at 18th and Lydia at either the Panama or the Florida Blossom (he can't remember which). It paid him 75 cents a night.

"The main idea of the job," Charlie recalls, "was to be there and hold a note."

Soon after this, he tried jamming for the first time at High Hat, at 22nd and Vine. He knew a little of "Lazy River" and "Honeysuckle Rose" and played what he could. He didn't find it difficult to hear the changes because the numbers were easy and the reedmen set a riff only for the brass, never behind a reedman. No two horns jammed at the same time.

"I was doing all right until I tried doing some double tempo on 'Body and Soul,' Charlie says. "Everybody fell out laughing. I went home and cried and didn't play again for three months."

In 1937 he joined Jay McShann's band, but left after two weeks. Later he was arrested for refusing to pay a cab fare. His mother, who didn't approve of his conduct then, wouldn't help him out, and he was jugged for 22 days. When he got out, he left his saxophone behind and bummed his way to New York.

For three months he washed dishes in Jimmy's Chicken Shack in Harlem. This was at the time Art Tatum was spellbinding late-hour Shack habitues. Charlie got $9 a week and meals. Then he quit and bummed around a while, sleeping where he could.

"I didn't have any trouble with cops," he recalls. "I was lucky. I guess it was because I looked so young." He was 17.

After he had been in New York for eight months, some guys at a jam session bought him a horn. With it he got a job in Kew Gardens that lasted for four months. even though he hadn't touched a horn in one-and-a-half years. Then he moved into Monroe's Uptown House with Ebenezer Paul on drums, Dave Riddick on trumpet and two or three other guys. There was no scale at Monroe's. Sometimes Charlie got 40 or 50 cents a night. If business was good, he might get up to $6.

"Nobody paid me much mind then except Bobby Moore, one of Count Basie's trumpet players," Charlie says. "He liked me. Everybody else was trying to get me to sound like Benny Carter."

Around this time, the middle of 1939, he heard some Bach and Beethoven for the first time. He was impressed with Bach's patterns.

"I found out that what the guys were jamming then already had been put down and, in most cases, a lot better."

At the end of 1939, shortly after his chili house session with Biddy Fleet, he went to Annapolis, Maryland, to play a hotel job with Banjo Burney. Then his father died and he went back to Kansas City, where he rejoined McShann.

Charlie cut his first records in Dallas, in the summer of 1940, with McShann. His first sides were "Confessin'," "Hootie Blues" (which he wrote), "Swingmatism" and "Vine Street Boogie."

His solos with McShann are on "Hootie," "Swingmatism," "Sepian Bounce," "Lonely Boy Blues" and "Jumpin' Boy Blues." He tried doing a little arranging then, but he didn't know much about it.

"I used to end up with the reeds blowin' above the trumpets," he explains.

The McShann band went from Texas to the Carolinas to Chicago, back to Kansas City headed east through Indiana and then to New York and the Savoy. Charlie drove the instrument truck all the way from Kansas City. While they were at the Savoy, Charlie doubled into Monroe's, where he played with Allen Terry, piano; George Treadwell (Sarah Vaughan's husband) and Victor Coulsen, trumpets; Ebenezer Paul, bass and Mole, drums.

He left McShann at the end of 1941 and joined Earl Hines in New York early in 1942. This was the Hines band that also had Dizzy, Billy Eckstine and Sarah Vaughan. Charlie had known Dizzy vaguely before this, and it was about this time they both started getting into the sessions at Minton's.

It was on this visit to New York, in late 1942 after he had worked out his basic approach to complex harmony, that Charlie heard Stravinsky for the first time when Ziggy Kelly played "Firebird" for him.

Charlie played tenor for the next 10 months he was with Hines. He started out getting more money than he had ever seen before — $105 a week. With McShann he had gotten $55 to $60. But the Bird was sent on an Army camp tour in a Pabst Blue Ribbon Salute package put together by Ralph Cooper, and their salaries started going down. This, with ongoing hassles, eventually broke up the band. Charlie dropped out in Washington, in 1943, and joined with Charles Thompson ("Robbins Nest" composer) at the Chrystal Caverns.

Later he came back to New York and cut his first sides since the McShann discs — the Tiny Grimes "Red Cross" and "Romance Without Finance" session for Savoy. Charlie worked off and on around New York during 1943 and 1944. In the spring of 1944, he was playing the Spotlite on 52nd Street, managed by Clark Monroe of Monroe's and on the site of the old Famous Door, when Doris Sydnor, the hatcheck girl there, raised an interested eye at him. Charlie, according to Doris, didn't notice it.

"He ignored me very coldly," she reports.

But Doris was a persistent girl. She didn't even know what instrument Charlie played when she first met him, but she stacked records by the Bird and Lester Young on her phonograph and listened and listened until she caught on to what they were doing. She and Charlie were married on Nov. 18, 1945, in New York.

Right after his wedding, Charlie went out to the coast with Dizzy to play at Billy Berg's. He

stayed there after the Berg's date was finished.

On the coast he started cutting sides for Ross Russell's Dial label until his physical [mental?] breakdown in August 1946 landed him in a hospital. His opinion of these Dial discs is low.

"'Bird Lore' and 'Lover Man' should be stomped into the ground," he says. "I made them the day before I went into the hospital. I had to drink a quart of whiskey to make the date."

Charlie stayed in the hospital until January 1947. Russell, who had hired a psychiatrist and a lawyer, got him released then into his custody and staged a benefit for the Bird, which produced some cash and two plane tickets back east.

But Parker is bitter about Russell's role in this. He says that Charlie Emge of DownBeat was equally helpful, that Russell refused to sign the papers releasing him unless he, Parker, renewed his contract with Dial. Later, Parker claims, he found that he had needed no outside help to get out.

When he originally signed with Russell, Charlie was already under contract to Herman Lubinsky of Savoy records. Before leaving New York, he had signed with Lubinsky to cut some 30 sides. Four of these were done before he went to the coast — "Ko-Ko," "Billie's Bounce," "Now's the Time" and "Anthropology." Lubinsky bought all four tunes from Charlie for $50 apiece.

Today Charlie has come full cycle. As he did in 1939, when he kicked off bop in the 7th Avenue chili house, he's beginning to think there's bound to be something more. He's hearing things again, things that he can't play yet. Just what these new things are, Charlie isn't sure yet. But from the direction of his present musical interests — Hindemith, etc. — it seems likely he's heading toward atonality. Charlie protests when he is mentioned in the same sentence with Hindemith, but, despite their vastly different starting points, he admits he might be working toward the same end.

This doesn't mean Charlie is through with bop. He thinks bop still is far from perfection and looks on any further steps he may take as further developments of bop.

"They teach you there's a boundary line to music," he says, "but, man, there's no boundary line to art."

For the future, he'd like to go to the Academy of Music in Paris for a couple of years, then relax for a while and then write. The things he writes all will be concentrated toward one point — warmth. While he's writing, he also wants to play experimentally with small groups. Ideally, he'd like to spend six months to a year in France and six months here.

"You've got to do it that way," he explains. "You've got to be here for the commercial things and in France for relaxing facilities."

Relaxation is something Charlie constantly has missed. Lack of relaxation, he thinks, has spoiled most of the records he has made. To hear him tell it, he has never cut a good side. Some of the things he did on the Continental label he considers more relaxed than the rest. But every record he has made could stand improvement, he says. We tried to pin him down, to get him to name a few sides that were at least better than the rest.

"Suppose a guy came up to us," we said, "and said. 'I've got four bucks, and I want to buy three Charlie Parker records. What'll I buy?' What should we tell him?"

Charlie laughed.

"Tell him to keep his money," he said.

Coda

We both were tremendously impressed by the cogency and clarity of Parker's thinking about music. Musicians, classical or jazz, are traditionally unanalytical about the things they create. Parker, however, has a definite idea of where he wants to go and what he wants to do, though he is properly vague as to the results.

His insistent vagueness as to exactly what bop is to him is no pose. Parker is a musician fighting for his proper mode of expression, a vastly talented man who hasn't the schooling yet to expand as completely and properly as his musical instincts would have him do.

If we understand his crypticisms correctly, Parker feels that traditional jazz has strongly lacked variety and economy of form as well as the wealth of discipline and control of ideas to be found in modern formalistic music. On the other hand, he feels the symphonic score of today lacks drive (contained, perhaps, in his concept of dynamics) and warmth, and that his group of musicians will help inject these aspects traditional to the jazz scene.

Parker's insistence that bop has no connection with jazz is interesting as an example of a younger musician bursting through forms that he finds constricting and that he feels have outlived their usefulness. We suspect his position might be difficult to maintain.

He undoubtedly is seriously searching for a synthesis of the best in formalistic and folk music. If he can achieve it, he will pull off a feat seldom before accomplished in music.

[…]

Parker struck us as being direct, honest and searching. He is constantly dissatisfied with his own work and with the music he hears around him. What will come of it, where his quite prodigious talent will take him, even he doesn't know at this stage.

But his ceaseless efforts to find out, to correct, to improve, only bode well for himself and that elderly progenitor, jazz. **DB**

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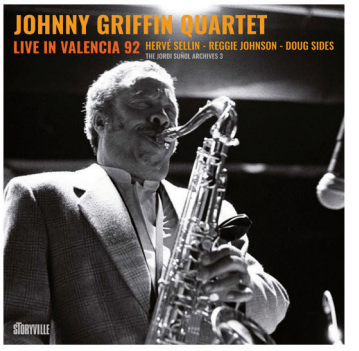

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Duke Tells Of 10 Top Thrills In 25 Years

By DUKE ELLINGTON

New York — I have been asked to list the 10 events that seem most memorable to me out of everything that has happened since we originally opened at the Cotton Club.

This is a task of considerable magnitude, since we have been fortunate enough to be on the receiving end of a large variety of honors. If I recall certain events and pay tribute to certain beautiful people, I may be unconsciously offending certain other beautiful people. However, I shall search my mind for the 10 occasions that stand out as personal memories.

Main Stem

Of course, our values today are greatly changed, but in those days there were certain things you had heard about that you always wanted to experience, and one of these was playing the Palace Theatre on Broadway. It meant reaching the peak for any artist who worked vaudeville, since the Palace was the ultimate in that field. So perhaps our first very big moment after the Cotton Club opening was the day we first played the Palace, in 1929.

Lights Out!

We opened the show with "Dear Old Southland." I remember the men hadn't memorized their parts on this, and the show opened on a darkened stage. When I gave the downbeat, nothing happened, the men couldn't see a note! Then somebody called for the lights and the show went on.

The next highlight, I believe, was our trip to the West Coast to make our film movie. It was the Amos and Andy feature *Check And Double Check*, and we did "Ring Dem Bells" and "Three Little Words." Later, of course, we were in Hollywood for *Murder at the Vanities*, Mae West's *Belle of the Nineties* and several other pictures; but there was a special kick out of making our screen debut.

BUD GERMAN

"This was a night that scared the devil out of the whole band, the applause was so terrifying — it was applause beyond applause," Ellington said about his ensemble's opening night in London.

We took time out from the Cotton Club to make *Check And Double Check*. Aside from that, we were at the club right along from our opening in December 1927 until early in 1931. We doubled into Ziegfeld's *Show Girl* and various theater dates. All

that time, we were on the air from the Cotton Club.

On the Air

Broadcasting was a lot simpler in those days; you didn't have to clear all your numbers a day or two in advance. I can remember times when Ted Husing would turn around to me in the middle of a broadcast and say, "Duke, how about playing so-and-so?" and we'd go right into it.

The next big moment was our opening night at the London Palladium. This was a night that scared the devil out of the whole band, the applause was so terrifying — it was applause beyond applause.

On our first show there was 10 minutes of continuous applause. It was a tremendous thrill. In fact, that entire first European tour in 1933 was a tremendous uplift for all our spirits.

Europe was responsible for the next big kick I can recall, too. It was my birthday celebration in Stockholm, April 29, 1939. I was awakened by a 16-piece band from the local radio station which marched into my hotel room serenading me with "Happy Birthday." All day long, at the hotel and at the Concert House where we were playing, huge bouquets of flowers kept arriving, and hundreds of people flocked to the dressing room.

The whole audience rose to sing "Happy Birthday," and there was a ceremony onstage, followed by a big banquet for the entire orchestra and numerous guests at the Crown Prince Cafe. It all brought a very glowing ending to our second European tour.

Two years later, in 1941, we got a very special kick out of the opening of *Jump for Joy*. This was the revue in which the whole band took part. A number of critics felt this was the hippest Negro musical and has remained so to this day. We had some great lyrics for our songs, thanks largely to Paul Francis Webster; some fine writing by Sid Kuller, and such artists as Marie Bryant and Paul White, Joe Turner, Herb Jeffries, Dorothy Dandridge and Wonderful Smith.

The Three B's

The sixth important occasion was the first Carnegie Hall concert — first of what turned out to be an annual series. This enabled me to present my Tone Parallel to the history of the American Negro, *Black, Brown and Beige*, which as originally presented at Carnegie ran about 50 minutes.

We only recorded excerpts from it for the RCA Victor album, but entire concert was recorded privately and we hope some day to have this recording released generally so that everybody can hear *BB&B* in its original form.

That first night at Carnegie was the only time in my life that I didn't have stage fright. I just didn't have time — I couldn't afford the luxury of being scared. Dr. Arthur Logan, an old friend and our personal physician, was standing around backstage handing out pills to everybody in the band. He even took one himself. He offered one to me and I refused it. I wasn't nervous — not at all. But I did walk onstage without my music. Somebody signaled to me from the wings that they had it — but I didn't need it, anyway. I remembered it all.

Carnegie Annual

This first concert, in January 1943, turned out to be a milestone that paved the way for other regular concert series, so that by now an annual jazz concert at Carnegie has become a permanent thing for several other organizations. One thing that hasn't been duplicated, however, is the audience we had on that opening night and at our subsequent concerts. The quality of the appreciation — the attentiveness of the entire crowd of 3,000 people to every note we played — was a model of audience reaction that has proved hard to duplicate.

At the time of that concert, too, the music business celebrated a national Ellington week, and during the performance at Carnegie we were privileged to receive a plaque inscribed by some of our well-wishers from every branch of music — among them John Charles Thomas, William Grant Sill, Deems Taylor, Marian Anderson, Albert Coates, Kurt Weill, Dea Dixon, Aaron Copland, Paul Whiteman, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Earl Hines, Artie Shaw, Morton Gould and Marjorie Lawrence.

Esquire Jazz

There was a similarly jubilant occasion in January 1945, when we took part in the annual Esquire jazz awards concert at the Philharmonic Auditorium in Los Angeles. Most of the presentations of "Eskies" to individual winners were made by Hollywood personalities. Billy Strayhorn received his from Lena Horne, mine was presented by Lionel Barrymore.

There was another great evening, in 1949, when we played at Robin Hood Dell in Philadelphia with this beautiful 96-piece symphony orchestra, conducted by Russ Case, wrapped around ours.

I spent a lot of time listening that evening when I should have been playing. I wrote a bop thing for them, using the same jump blues theme we recorded on one of the small band dates as "Who Struck John." They played it perfectly.

Harlem

Ninth on our list of significant moments would be the concert at the Metropolitan Opera House early last year. Our audience

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A few months after this article was published, Ellington took this photo sending a set of drums to Louie Bellson (Ellington's drummer at the time), who had married singer Pearl Bailey in London on Nov. 19, 1952. Ellington wanted Bellson to stay in "top-notch condition" for his return to the band.

numbered over 3,500 including Mayor Impellitteri, who paid a special tribute to us onstage, and we introduced a new concert work, *Harlem*, which I later performed with the NBC Symphony orchestra.

Tenth and last, I recall with special delight another Philadelphia story — this one was the annual Musical Festival held by the Philadelphia Inquirer at the Municipal Stadium, with a tremendous show for an audience of 125,000 people, all admitted free. There were, if I remember right, three symphony orchestras as well as Benny Goodman, Perry Como, Mindy Carson and a big Indian war dance routine. I was especially impressed by the fact that when I did "Monologue," I had the whole audience giggling — and believe me, it's quite impressive to hear 125,000 people giggling.

Then There Was ...

It is a somewhat arbitrary decision to select 10 events over a 25-year span, but these are the ones that came to mind. Of course, I could go into many details about some of the great people we've met through the years.

There was my meeting with the Pope, on my last visit to Europe, when the Pope had a great deal to say to me, but I must have been overawed because later I didn't remember a single thing he had said. There was my private audience with President Truman, whom I found very affable and very musically informed. There was the party in London when I fluffed off the guy who kept asking me to play "Swampy River," and then found out he was Prince George. Later that evening the Duke of Windsor (then Prince of Wales) sat in with us on drums and surprised everybody, including Sonny Greer.

Sincerity

There was the time we were playing the downtown Cotton Club in 1937 when Leopold Stokowski came in alone and listened to our band. Later he discussed our music and invited me to attend his concert the next evening, when I heard him conducting the Philadelphia orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

But I don't want to go on name-dropping, because what has impressed me most through all these years has been not the renown of these people, but the sincerity of their interest in our music, and the interest of all the audiences who have helped to make our achievements possible. I can best sum it up by saying that the days since that long-ago Cotton Club opening have provided 25 years of eminently happy memories. **DB**

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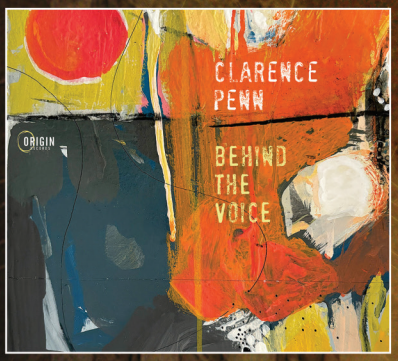

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THE CANDIDATE MEETS THE PRESS

Presidential Candidate John Birks Gillespie views affairs of state with jaundiced — and jolly — eye.

As the hustle on the hustings continues up to election day, with Democrat and Republican decrying one another's policies and impugning one another's honor and worse, John Birks (Dizzy) Gillespie plows his own political way in his race for the Presidency of the United States.

The 47-year-old trumpeter from Cheraw, North Carolina, is pursuing his political campaign, offering several solid planks: intelligence and humor about the whole business of running for office, sincere dedication to the principles of Negro rights and the fight to win them fully and lots of the best jazz there is.

Following are excerpts from a recent press conference held in Los Angeles.

RONALD SKEETZ

The candidate and his crew, from left: Kenny Barron, Dizzy Gillespie, James Moody, Chris White, Shelly Manne and Rudy Collins.

Q: In your campaign, do you have any specific criticisms of the platforms of the two major parties? If so, what are they?

A: First things come first. First, civil rights. I think that some of the major civil rights groups are on the wrong track. The real issue of civil rights is not the idea of discrimination in itself but the system that led to the discrimination, such as the schools — the teaching in the schools. They don't teach the kids about the dignity of all men everywhere. They say that there should be education. Okay. I say education, yes; but the white people are the ones who should be educated into how to treat every man. And the system of discrimination started during slavery time — with the slaves — it's an economic thing. Of course, we don't have that slave system at the moment, but we do have something in its place, such as discrimination against people economically.

Economics is the key to the whole thing. For example, if all of my followers said that we weren't going to buy one single product for three days, think of what would happen to the stock on that one product on the stock market in one day. If it would drop drastically — boom! They would hurry up to protect the investors; they would hurry up to rectify a gross injustice.

Q: How many people do you think would be involved in this, in terms of purchasing power — 20 million … 30 million?

A: There are millions and millions of right-thinking people in this country.

Q: Not just Negro people?

A: Not just Negro people. No, no.

Q: Then you'd probably get 60 million to go along with you?

A: I'd like to see that ... 60 million people wouldn't buy a product for three days. … There would be bedlam on the stock market. And they would hurry up and do something about this ... thing [discrimination].

The other thing is about the income tax situation. There are

certain elements in our society that have better breaks on the income tax situation than others. I say we should make "numbers" legal. A national lottery for the whole country. And everybody — little grocery stores, gasoline stations — would sell books of tickets. All that money would go to the government. Do you realize that millions and millions of dollars a day are taken in "numbers" [which is illegal]. Everybody is a gambler. When you come here on earth, you gamble whether you want to live to see tomorrow. So they should channel those virtues in the right direction.

Q: What about accusations that "numbers" bleed the poor and that only the rich people can back the "numbers"?
A: That's who's [the rich] getting all the loot, that's who's getting all the money now. But the government would get that money.

Q: Wouldn't you lose a lot of supporters from the church and from churchgoing people?
A: I notice in some of the churches, they have bingo nights. People go to bingo night better than they would come to see me in a club where they have whisky. Of course, you would have to get the clergy behind you. And then if you hit the "numbers," if you hit for a dollar, you get $600.

Q: We've been hearing so much for the last six months or so about the so-called white backlash. Do you have any comment on that?
A: Yes. In the first place, the people who are affected by the white backlash, we haven't had them anyway. See? If we are going to judge how to treat a human being by a bunch of hoodlums' riots in certain places, well, we don't need them anyway. I have that much confidence in the integrity of the American people that we have enough people to really do something about the situation. So the ones who are affected by the backlash — shame on 'em. We never had 'em anyway.

Q: In the interim period — while the school system is being settled and minority groups are getting equal opportunities — what do you suggest to raise the economic level of Negroes and other minority groups until they have the opportunity to have the same education and, therefore, get the same types of jobs as whites?
A: I would suggest that when an applicant for any employment ... when an applicant comes in to take his ... to decide on his qualifications for a job, it should be behind a screen. This system of discrimination against us is so strong that the moment a black face walks in, we know that we're going to have to do a little more than the white person to get the job. But when an applicant comes in, and he's behind a screen, his aptitudes for a job are on paper and you ask him questions or something, and you won't know what you've hired until he has either flunked it or made it.

Q: Could we have your comments on the two candidates of the major parties and their programs? First, Sen. Barry Goldwater.
A: I think his program stinks. I think the senator's program is ultraconservative. I think that Sen. Goldwater wants to take us back to the horse-and-buggy days when we are in the space age. And we are looking forward, not backward. President Johnson? He's done a magnificent job.

Q: In what area?
A: In the area of civil rights — for what he has done and with the backing he has. But I'm sure that if I don't get to be President — which I hope I shall — then I think that President Johnson would make a much, much, much better President than Mr. Goldwater.

Q: We're in an era in which we are told only a millionaire can be President. Are you a millionaire? [*Laughter*]
A: Not by any stretch of your imagination. I remember some years ago when I was in Paris, I saw a headline on one of the tabloids — the *New York Mirror* — which is presently defunct, and it said in the headline: BEBOP MILLIONAIRE IN TROUBLE. There are certain spheres of our media of communication, there are certain newspapers that I don't believe anything I read in them. This one was preposterous because at that time I didn't know one bebop musician who had two quarters to rub up against one another.

Q: Seriously, how important do you consider a lot of money is in political campaigning?
A: I understand Gov. Rockefeller … there will be a moment of silence when I mention that name. I understand that he spent in the primaries alone almost $2 million or something like that.

But I look at it this way: Suppose I were a millionaire. That's a very far-fetched idea. And suppose there was a guy in trouble someplace, and I say, "Here's $10,000" — with the television camera on me, and the radio — $10,000 clear. [Then] if I were a poor man, say, making $75 a week, and I see a guy who's ragged and doesn't have any shoes on and his clothes are in tatters, and I walk up to him and I say, "Come here." And I go to a secondhand store and buy him $6.79 worth of clothes. My idea of that is, I've done more by giving this guy this little gift. I call it having a respect for, and having a big heart for, the little guy.

Q: What do you think of Hubert Humphrey?
A: When we toured for the State Department the first time, in 1956, we were invited to play for the White House correspondents' ball. I had the good fortune to meet Sen. Humphrey. I walked up to Sen. Humphrey without an introduction. I said, "Do you know one thing? I don't particularly care for politicians." He looked at me. I said, "But you are my favorite politician." He came right back and said, "If you ever come to Minneapolis, I want you to look me up." So maybe I might get some backing from Sen. Humphrey.

Q: What about the residue from the New Frontier, the men who surrounded President Kennedy and are still in Washington?
A: I can't say that I blame President Johnson about that because when he repudiated all the men that surrounded the late President Kennedy. … You see, President Johnson has a problem. We loved the late President Kennedy, as did most Americans; we were madly in love with him. My wife cried for weeks and weeks and weeks after his death. But you see Johnson had to do that because in history he wants to be judged by what he did, not for what President Kennedy started. He wants to identify himself with his ideas about social problems that have to be faced. He wants to live and die with his philosophy. I'll go along with that.

Q: If you were to pick a vice-presidential running mate, who would it be? Or have you done so already?
A: I was thinking of asking Phyllis Diller. She seems to have that sua-a-a-a-ve manner; she looks far into the future. She's looking into

> ***'Minister of peace Charles Mingus. Anybody have any objections to that?'***

RONALD SKEETZ

"Automation will never replace the musician himself," Gillespie told DownBeat. "We would have to set up some kind of a thing to protect the musician from that."

the future. So I'm a future man, I said to her.

Q: Have you approached her?
A: I sent one of my emissaries. I sent one of my emissaries to sound her on that. I understand that she is for it. She was going to vote for me, anyway, so she'd just as well get in there and work.

Q: What about your cabinet? Who would you select for cabinet officers?
A: In the first place, I want to eliminate secretaries.

Q: Why?
A: In French that would be feminine gender, and we don't want anyone effeminate in our form of government. I'm going to make all ministers.

Minister of foreign affairs: Duke Ellington.

Minister of peace: Charlie Mingus. Anybody have any objections to that? I think it would get through the Senate. Right through.

Minister of agriculture: Louis Armstrong.

Q: Why?
A: Well, you know he's from New Orleans; he knows all about growing things.

Ministress of labor: Peggy Lee. She's very nice to her musicians, so … labor-management harmony. It's harmony between labor and management.

Minister of justice: Malcolm X. Who would be more adept at meting out justice to people who flouted it than Malcolm? Can you give me another name? Whenever I mention this name, people say, "Hawo-O-O-O." But I am sure that if we were to channel his genius — he's a genius — in the right direction, such as minister of justice, we would have some peaceful times here. Understand?

Ministress of finance: Jeannie Gleason. Ralph Gleason's wife. When she can put the salary of a newspaperman — you know it's not too great, you have to pinch here and there — when she can keep that money together, she's a genius. So I'm sure that she would be able to run our fiscal policy.

My executive assistant would be Ramona Swettschurt Crowell, the one who makes my sweatshirts.

Minister of defense: Max Roach. Head of the CIA: Miles Davis.

Q: Why?
A: O-o-oh, honey, you know his schtick. He's ready for that position. He'd know just what to do in that position.

All my ambassadors: Jazz musicians. The cream.

Gov. George C. Wallace: Chief information officer in The Congo … under Tshombe.

We would resume relations with Communist Cuba.

Q: Why?
A: Well, I've been reading the newspapermen who were invited to Cuba to look at the revolution there. … It seems Premier Castro wants to talk about reparations. But he wants to talk about it on a diplomatic level, which means respect. I am a man to respect, to respect a country, Cuba, regardless of their political affiliations; they are there, and there's no doubt about it.

And I was reading in the articles that they'll be there a while. So I would recognize that we send an ambassador, in an exchange of ambassadors, to Cuba to see if we can work out this problem of indemnity for the factories and things that they have expropriated. I think that any government has that privilege of nationalizing their wealth. It's theirs; it's just theirs. So if they want to pay for it. ... Of course, we built it up, we were out there; it wasn't our country in the first place. But since they built it up and Mr. Castro wants to pay you for it, I think we should accept the money with grace.

Q: What about Communist China?
A: I think we should recognize them.

Q: Why?
A: Can you imagine us thinking that 700 million people are no people? How much percent is that of the world's population? I think we should recognize them. Besides, we need that business. We're about to run out of markets, you know. All of a sudden you wake up and there's 700 million more people to sell something to. And jazz festivals. Can you imagine: We could go to China with a jazz festival and spend 10 years there at jazz festivals. We'd forget all about you over here. We'd send back records.

Q: *We're very deeply involved in Viet Nam; what would be your policy on this situation?*
A: We're not deeply involved enough in Viet Nam. I think we should either recognize the fight or take a chance on World War — is it three? There's been so many. Either do it, or get out of

there. Because every day American soldiers are walking around and — boom! — out, finished, kaput. They're being killed, and they don't even know hardly that they're even at war. We haven't declared war. So I think we should really either straighten it out — and we have the means to do that — or get out of there. I think we should do it or don't do it. But if I were President, I'd get out of there. I'd say, "Look, y'all got it, baby. Yeah, good luck." I'd get American soldiers out of there.

Q: As one of our most prominent musicians, you are aware that automation has played the devil with musicians' livelihoods. What would your policy be on automation?
A: Automation will never replace the musician himself. We would have to set up some kind of a thing to protect the musician from that. There's a bill in Congress now — oh, it's been up for a long time; I get letters from ASCAP and my Society for the Protection of Songwriters; writing letters to senators to get them to vote for this bill — to make them give us part of that money that's going into jukeboxes. As soon as the jukebox operators find out that you have to pay some money out there, a nice little taste of money, they'll start hiring live musicians again, I think. Instead of having the jukeboxes there, they'd hire some musicians.

Q: What do you think the role of the musicians' union should be in this regard?
A: Aw, the musicians' union! Why did you bring that up? Is this for publication? It is? Ah, the role of the musicians' union — it has been very lax in this space age. They have wallowed in the age of the horse-and-buggy and the cotton gin. I don't think they're doing a very good job.

All they're doing is taking the money.

Q: In a recent interview, Duke Ellington said that from his personal standpoint he didn't agree with subsidies for his music. What should your attitude as President be toward federal subsidies for the arts, particularly music?
A: We need subsidies for the arts. I'm a firm believer in that. Since jazz is our prime art, that should be the first thing we should subsidize.

Q: How would you go about that?
A: I'd have to work it out with someone who is familiar with it.

Q: How about a civil-service night club?
A: Now, that's a good idea. A civil service night club. That'd be nice. I've been speaking to Max Roach about an organization composed of jazz musicians to perpetuate our own music. This year at Newport we had a jazz festival. Also they had a folk festival, which was marvelous. I mean, it just got down at the bottom of everything.

Y'see, jazz musicians — they're so busy being jealous of one another that they can't get together, so they need some rallying point. Max told me, "You're the only one that could do it. You should call a summit meeting and have all the guys. Send them a letter; say, 'Be there!' And they would be there." So we were speaking about this. So we're probably going to get together. ...

But musicians should be on the production end of jazz. Like Shelly Manne is here in Hollywood. He's a musician who's on the production end of it, and I'm sure that the atmosphere in his club is different from any club in the country because he thinks like a musician. Just think of an organization of musicians who would dictate the policies of clubs where you play: "Say, look, you've got to have a piano that's in tune — that's 440 — and lights and maybe little stairs going here and going there."

Musicians got some ideas. I imagine if you'd turn them loose on ideas of what kind of people they should have in the clubs and how best they could present that music to people, then all of us would benefit by it because all of us would be doing it.

So the musician, with his fantastic ideas about music, if you could channel them into the production end of music, how best we could serve the public — which we are in it to do — I imagine there would be a big rejuvenation of jazz. We could put on four mammoth concerts in one year — one in New York, one in L.A., one in Chicago and one in the Midwest.

They would be in the biggest ball parks, and we'd have people who love jazz, such as Frank Sinatra, Nat Cole (a jazz musician himself), Marlon Brando, Phyllis Diller, Harry Belafonte, all of those people have been helped by jazz. All of them have been helped by it, and I'm sure they would go all out to put a little thing into it. So they would help us with these things.

And we would get an administrator to run it — and pay him, pay him to run it. And let it be run on a businesslike basis, like U.S. Steel is run. We'd have an executive board, a chairman of the board, directors, president and all that jive.

Q: On a personal level, what is your own opinion of Cassius Clay, or Mohammed Ali, as he is now known?
A: My personal opinion of him? I don't know him that well to pass a personal opinion of him. I would have to know a person very well before I would pass an opinion. … I'm a firm believer in: If you can't say something good about somebody, don't say anything at all.

Q: If your opponents in the presidential race start any mud-slinging ... ?
A: Oh, that's different. A political campaign is something altogether different. And then, afterward, you kiss and make up.

Q: Goldwater, too?
A: I don't think we would be on too good terms, not on kissing terms anyway. **DB**

"Now it is not a thing of beauty, and the only way it would be justified is if it becomes that," Coltrane said of working out new directions in his music. "If I can't work it through, I will drop it."

CHUCK STEWART

October 16, 1958

TRANE ON

By Ira Gitler

Asked about being termed an "angry young tenor" in this publication's coverage of the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, John Coltrane said, "If it is interpreted as angry, it is taken wrong. The only one I'm angry at is myself when I don't make what I'm trying to play."

The 32-year-old native of Hamlet, North Carolina, has had his melancholy moments, but he feels that they belong to a disjointed, frustrating past. The crucial point in his development came after he joined Dizzy Gillespie's band in 1951.

Prior to that, he had studied music and worked in Philadelphia, assuming many of the fashionable nuances of the Charlie Parker-directed groups. When the offer to join the Gillespie band came, Coltrane felt ready.

The feeling turned out to be illusory.

"What I didn't know with Diz was that what I had to do was really express myself," Coltrane remembered. "I was playing cliches and trying to learn tunes that were hip, so I could play with the guys who played them.

"Earlier, when I had first heard Bird, I wanted to be identified with him ... to be consumed by him," he said. "But underneath I really wanted to be myself.

"You can only play so much of another man."

Dejected and dissatisfied with his own efforts, Coltrane left Gillespie and returned to Philadelphia in search of a musical ideal and the accompanying integrity. Temporarily, he attempted to find escape in work.

"I just took gigs," he said. "You didn't have to play anything. The less you played, the better it was."

Plagued by economic difficulties, he searched for a steady job. In 1952, he found one, with a group led by Earl Bostic, whom he admires as a saxophonist even though he disliked the rhythm-and-blues realm the band dwelt in. But this job did not demolish the disillusion and lethargy that had captured him.

"Any time you play your horn, it helps you," he said. "If you got down, you can help yourself even in a rock 'n' roll band. But I didn't help myself."

A more productive step was made in 1953, when Coltrane joined a group headed by Johnny Hodges.

"We played honest music in this band," he recalled. "It was my education to the older generation."

Gradually, Coltrane rationalized the desire to work regularly with the aim of creating forcefully. In 1955, he returned to Philadelphia and, working with a group led by conga drummer Bill Carney, took a stride toward achieving his goal. As he recalled, "We were too musical for certain rooms."

In late 1955, Miles Davis beckoned. Davis had noted Coltrane's playing and wanted him in a new quintet he was forming. He encouraged Coltrane; this encouragement gradually opened adventurous paths for Coltrane. Other musicians and listeners began to pay close attention to him. When Davis disbanded in 1957, Coltrane joined Thelonious Monk's quartet.

Coltrane will not forget the role Davis and Monk played in assisting his development.

"Miles and Monk are my two musicians," he said. "Miles is the No. 1 influence over most of the modern musicians now. There isn't much harmonic ground he hasn't broken. Just listening to the beauty of his playing opens up doors. By the time I run up on something, I find Miles or Monk has done it already.

"Some things I learn directly from them. Miles has shown me possibilities in choosing substitutions within a chord and also new progressions."

Enveloped in the productive atmosphere of both the Davis and Monk groups, Coltrane emerged more an individualist than ever before. In

early '58, he rejoined Davis. In the months since he did so, he has become more of an influence on other jazz instrumentalists. His recordings, on Prestige, Blue Note and with Davis on Columbia, often are matters for passionate debate.

Yet, there is no denying his influence. There are traces of his playing in that of Junior Cook with Horace Silver's group, and in Benny Golson, previously a Don Byas-Lucky Thompson-out-of-Coleman Hawkins tenor man.

Coltrane's teammate in the Davis sextet, Cannonball Adderley, recently said, "Coltrane and Sonny Rollins are introducing us to some new music, each in his own way. I think Monk's acceptance, after all this time, is giving musicians courage to keep playing their original ideas, come what may."

When the jazz audience first heard Coltrane, with Davis in 1955 and '56, he was less an individualist. His style derived from those of Dexter Gordon (vintage mid-'40s), Sonny Stitt, Sonny Rollins (the Rollins of that time and slightly before), Stan Getz (certain facets of sound) and an essence of generalized Charlie Parker. As he learned harmonically from Davis and Monk, and developed his mechanical skills, a new more confident Coltrane emerged. He has used long lines and multi-noted figures within these lines, but in 1958 he started playing sections that might be termed "sheets of sound."

When these efforts are successful, they have a cumulative emotional impact, a residual harmonic effect. When they fail, they sound like nothing more than elliptically phrased scales.

This approach, basic to Coltrane's playing today, is not the result of a conscious effort to produce something "new." He has noted that it has developed spontaneously.

"Now it is not a thing of beauty, and the only way it would be justified is if it becomes that," he said. "If I can't work it through, I will drop it."

Although he is satisfied with the progress he's made during the last three years, Coltrane continues to be critical of his own work. Dejection is no longer a major part of this self criticism. Now, he seeks to improve, knowing he can do so.

"I have more work to do on my tone and articulation," he said. "I must study more general technique and smooth out some harmonic kinks.

> ***'Jazz used to be happy and joyous. I'd like to play happy and joyous.'***

Sometimes, while playing, I discover two ideas, and instead of working on one, I work on two simultaneously and lose the continuity."

Assured that the vast frustration he felt in the early '50s is gone, Coltrane attempts to behave in terms of a broad code, which he outlined:

"Keep listening. Never become so self-important that you can't listen to other players. Live cleanly ... Do right ... You can improve as a player by improving as a person. It's a duty we owe to ourselves."

A married man, with an 8-year-old daughter, Coltrane hopes to meet the responsibilities of his music and his life without bitterness, for "music is the means of expression with strong emotional content. Jazz used to be happy and joyous. I'd like to play happy and joyous." **DB**

LEE TANNER

The Spirit Of Collaboration

MELBA LISTON & RANDY WESTON

CHUENG CHING MING

By Zan Stewart

At its core, jazz is about the new, the fresh, the previously unheard idea, the unspoken thought. As drummer Shelly staunchly strives for innovation, jazz doesn't easily suffer repetition, detests clichés, eschews comfort.

And with improvisation its primary fact, jazz has emerged as the art of the individual, the role of the single performer taking precedence over the collective effort. Even in the periods when musicians have been united in a mutual thread of conception, as in the beginnings of bebop, it was still the primary participants (e.g., Parker, Gillespie, Monk) who were seen as dominant influences, not a gaggle of artists working together for a common goal. That's why the lengthy teaming of two artists in collaboration runs so against form. Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. Miles Davis and Gil Evans. John Lewis and Milt Jackson. Cedar Walton and Billy Higgins. Randy Weston and Melba Liston — these prolonged relationships are the exception, not the rule.

Arranger/composer and former trombonist Liston and pianist/composer Weston possess one of the music's longest partnerships. The pair met around 1956, when Liston, a native of Kansas City who was raised in Los Angeles, was playing and writing for Dizzy Gillespie's big band. In her fruitful career, she's also composed for Count Basie, Gerald Wilson, Quincy Jones and many others. Weston, who was born in Brooklyn and was initially moved by the playing of Thelonious Monk, needed someone to craft charts for an album of waltzes.

Since then, the two — both 68 — have worked together on numerous projects, with Liston writing the arrangements mostly to Weston's compositions on *Uhuru Africa* (1960), *Tanjah* ('73) and, recently, *The Spirits Of Our Ancestors* ('92) and *Volcano Blues* ('93). Many of these albums — as one can sense from the titles — have an African flavor. Weston has been enthralled with the largest continent since he was a youth, and has lived in Morocco.

The pianist's latest solo album, *The Splendid Master Gnawa Musicians Of Marrakech*, features Gnawan percussionists and singers from Morocco. He also has a solo piano album, *Marrakech In The Cool Of The Evening*, due out this spring. As for Liston, who suffered a severe stroke in 1985 and is paralyzed on her right side, she's writing charts at her Macintosh home-based setup for a project that will be recorded with Weston early this year.

Liston and Weston were interviewed via a conference call: Weston was in Berlin, where he was touring with his trio, a group of

Gnawan musicians from Morocco, and bluesman Johnny Copeland, while Liston was at home in Los Angeles. Many of their spontaneous and affectionate responses to questions are included to give readers a glimpse into the intimate nature of their relationship.

ZAN STEWART: *How long has it been since you two have seen each other?*
MELBA LISTON: Not that long ...
RANDY WESTON: I was out there, what, a month ago?

STEWART: *Were you talking about your new project at that point?*
WESTON: Exactly. We're going to do strings and a trio, and Melba's going to do the charts.

STEWART: *What made you decide to use strings?*
WESTON: Melba did such beautiful arrangements with the Boston Pops, with John Williams conducting, when we did my piece "Three African Queens" in 1981. It was wonderful, and she wrote such beautiful arrangements. I've always wanted to do an album with Melba with strings.

STEWART: *Melba, have you started working on this at all?*
LISTON: Oh, yeah. I have a tribute to Lady Day, to Billie Holiday, and others. I can't even think.
WESTON: I threw so many tunes at her.

STEWART: *Are these all originals, Randy?*
WESTON: Yeah, a combination of spirituals, ballads, a couple of African lines.
LISTON: I have three or four of them started.

STEWART: *These days, how do you work together? Melba, when Randy comes to Los Angeles and you get together, what really goes on?*
LISTON: [*laughs and whoops — as does Randy*]

STEWART: *In a musical way!*
LISTON: He comes over and he comes in the music room and we just ... start. I don't know! [*Randy's still laughing*]

STEWART: *For example, did he bring in some tunes, did he play some tunes for you?*
LISTON: We know all the tunes already. I have the music.

STEWART: *Do you show him sketches?*
LISTON: I show him some sketches, and he shows me some sketches, and we just go all around.

STEWART: *Its such a long collaboration — 36 years now, right?*
LISTON: I don't know. [*both laughing*]

STEWART: *Well, the first album was* Little Niles*, right?*
LISTON: Yes.

STEWART: *That was 1958. But you two had met prior to that. According to Randy's memory, you met at Birdland when you were playing with Diz.*
LISTON: Yeah, that's right.

STEWART: *So, what first struck you about Melba? What do you think led to the first seeds of even getting together and saying hello and meeting each other?*
WESTON: Some things you can't really describe. Number one, just seeing a woman playing trombone in a big, all-male (except for her) orchestra. I never saw that before. That was the first thing. The second thing, this was an incredible orchestra, so I knew she had to be fantastic. And she was very beautiful in addition to all of that, right?

And then Diz introduced her, featured her on an arrangement she did on "My Reverie." And I heard the arrangement, and it was so beautiful. I introduced myself to Melba, and I shook her hand, and that was it.

STEWART: *Why did Melba come into your mind when you wanted an arranger?*
WESTON: There are some things that you just can't explain that happen in life. I don't think Melba can explain it, either. Osmosis you wanna call it, vibrations you wanna call it, spiritual contact you wanna call it. Next thing I knew, I was in her apartment playing these waltzes for her and asking would she do the arrangements, and that was it.
LISTON: That was beautiful, too, when he came to my apartment and played the waltzes.
WESTON: On a comparison — and I'm not comparing it musically — but like Strayhorn and Duke, I sometimes couldn't tell who was who. Melba had a way of taking my melodies and doing an arrangement and she would add some lines of hers — those lines might be my lines, in a very creative way. She's taken my music and just expanded it. […]

STEWART: *Randy, how did you feel when you first heard the music that Melba had written for the album?*
WESTON: The thing was that the spirits were in the studio. All the tremendous musicians who were there [the album was a big band date featuring such guests as Dizzy Gillespie and Pharoah Sanders] and everybody giving their all. And then Dizzy came in and took it on another level. Because I discovered Melba because of Dizzy Gillespie. And most people on this planet, Dizzy has touched them somewhere or somehow. Because he had the incredible combination of being a master musician, arranger, bandleader, comedian, but he also had a way of helping a lot of artists, exposing a lot of artists ... Lee Morgan, Melba Liston, Charli Persip. So when Dizzy came to the studio, to see him and Melba together was so beautiful, I can't describe it, just so wonderful.

STEWART: *What was that like for you, Melba, to see Dizzy like that?*
LISTON: Well, I loved him all the time. I've been in love with him since 1940-something. I'm just in love with him, you know? So any time I see him is a thrill. That's all it is.

STEWART: *How did you decide to do the* Volcano Blues *album?*
WESTON: That was [producer] Jean-Philippe [Allard]'s idea. It scared the hell out of me. Yeah, man! Why? Do you know how many blues albums must have been made on this planet? [*much laughter*] He scared the hell out of me when he said that. I was reluctant, but he's such a wonderful guy, he believes in our music so much. He kept saying, "Man, you can play the blues, I like how you play the blues." So I said, "Help, Melba Liston!" [*both laugh*] So that's how it happened. […]

STEWART: *One of the things you have said, and I don't think it can be said often enough, is about the blues. What was it about learning the blues that was so important to you when you were first coming up?*
WESTON: Well, the elders told us, if you want to play jazz, you gotta play the blues. [*both laugh*]

STEWART: *Do you ever get tired of playing the blues?* [*more laughter*]
WESTON: When you hear the real blues piano players and the real gospel players, it's another thing. I try to capture what I can, but I'm from New York, born in New York, it's a different vibe. You know what I'm saying? [*Melba still laughing*] You've gotta live closer to the earth to play that music. […]

STEWART: *Randy, there's obviously something very magical between you and Melba, and you bring a lot of joy to her. I know it goes both ways, but I really thought that was very important.*
WESTON: Well, she's a special lady, and you don't have too many people like that on the planet, you know? And she's so low-key and so withdrawn, and that's why she doesn't get enough attention. And sometimes, when you're around masters, you have to watch and listen. That's what I learned from being around Monk. You can learn a lot that way. And I've thought about Melba: There are so many great people who are very quiet, and because of that, they just don't get the proper recognition that they should. **DB**

May 1982

SARAH VAUGHAN

"I'm Not A Jazz Singer"

BY A. JAMES LISKA

PHOTO BY TOM COPI

"I'm the same way now that I was when I was 18. I don't go for that star stuff," said Sarah Vaughan.

In late 1980, during the first of four Frank Nelson Doubleday lectures at the Smithsonian Institution, the subject of singing was approached via this question: "Who is the greatest vocal artist of the century?"

On hand to answer the question and supply the evidence was Gunther Schuller, a man whose mark has been made on American music through his efforts as a composer, conductor and scholar. Schuller noted that "it's one thing to have a beautiful voice. It is another to be a great musician. It is still another to be a great musician with a beautiful voice who can also compose." He then proceeded to list several opera singers (Lauritz Melchior, Cesare Siepi, Kirsten Flagstad and Maria Callas) in tandem with several jazz musicians (Louis Armstrong, Joe Williams and Charlie Parker). The comparative evidence supplied, his biases exposed, Schuller announced

PHOTOS BY TOM COPI

Sarah Vaughan as the answer to the difficult question. "Hers is a perfect instrument, attached to a musician of superb instincts, capable of expressing profound human experience, with a wholly original voice."

"Leontyne Price," Vaughan offers quickly as her own answer to the same question, adding that when she hears a commentary like Schuller's, she first blushes. "Then it gets embarrassing," she says, laughing that little girl laugh which so regularly punctuates her speech. "They say it and go on and on and on. I'm just so happy that everybody enjoys what I do."

It is a few days before Vaughan's all-Gershwin concert with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which Michael Tilson Thomas will conduct. Vaughan is relaxing in the tastefully appointed bedroom of her suburban Los Angeles home, a great sprawling house high atop a hill in a carefully guarded, exclusive community in the San Fernando Valley. Her preparation for the concert, a program performed frequently in the past, includes home rehearsals with Tilson Thomas, whose arrival is expected momentarily.

"I'm a one-room person," Vaughan says, looking around the room, which serves as both sleeping and working quarters. The room, which opens out onto the swimming pool, is large by any standard and has all of the usual bedroom furnishings. Black-and-white photographs of a variety of jazz figures, in simple black frames, adorn the wall over the bed's headboard. Against another wall there is an upright piano equipped with a Pianocorder — an electric piano and a portable electronic keyboard which she takes on her frequent tours. A television set is situated to facilitate her watching from bed, and atop it is the familiar golden figure of an Emmy award.

"I won that for a TV show I did, but nobody ever knew about it. People are always surprised I won that," she laughs. She gets up and walks past the Emmy, toward a window overlooking the Valley, and gazes into the fog-bound evening. If people don't remember the Emmy, they do remember and like her singing. Her thoughts have left the subject of the Emmy and return to her popularity and hard-earned fame. "It's unbelievable, that's what that is, that everybody likes me as well as they do. I still can't believe it."

Sarah Vaughan's being where she is was not so much a matter of planning, nor the result of years of rigorous training, as it was just being in the right place at the right time, initially, at least. "I was going to be a hairdresser before I got into show business. I always wanted to be in show business, and when I got in, I didn't try. I just went to the amateur hour, and in two weeks, I was in show business. It shocked me to death and it took me a long time to get over that."

That "amateur hour" was a contest at New York's Apollo Theatre. She won the competition and was recommended by singer Billy Eckstine to his boss, bandleader Earl Hines. Vaughan made her debut as a pianist and singer with Hines' band in April of 1943, leaving the next year to join Eckstine's own band. She stayed with him until 1945. Since that time and with few exceptions — not counting innumerable guest appearances with various bands — she has worked as a solo throughout her illustrious career. Usually she relies on her own small groups — like her current one of pianist George Gaffney, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Harold Jones — to provide accompaniment.

Preparation for such a career was minimal at best. As a child in Newark, New Jersey, Vaughan sang at the Mount Zion Baptist Church and studied piano. But she never had any formal voice training or music education by today's standards. Her training came more in the way of exposure to, and working with, some of jazz music's greats, from the swing and bebop eras to contemporary time. Strongly associated with Parker and Gillespie, her unique vocal qualities have enabled her to gain acceptance in both the jazz and pop worlds, with abilities equal to many an opera singer. Those vocal abilities have attracted such fellow musicians as Michael Tilson Thomas, who has just arrived at her home to rehearse for the upcoming concert appearance with the L.A. Philharmonic.

PHOTO BY BRIAN MCMILLAN

When Billy Eckstine, right, heard Vaughan sing, he recommended her to, Earl Hines.

"Do Chopin-style," exhorts Tilson Thomas from the keyboard of the acoustic piano. "Take the time at the bottom, then get it back." He turns to Vaughan, who is now sitting on the edge of her bed studying the page of music he has written to introduce "The Man I Love" and petting one of her three dogs which make frequent runs through her bedroom. "You know all about that stuff."

"I'll be glad when people find out that I do not know everything," she replies firmly.

"You know everything there is to know," he says, his voice gently offering reassurance.

She interrupts him with, "I know everything I know." She pauses and laughs. "That's a good line."

Though Vaughan and Tilson Thomas have performed all-Gershwin programs before, new material is constantly being added, and this is no exception. "These new tunes have me a nervous wreck," Vaughan admits. "I like new tunes. But they make me nervous. I can't help it." Her voice changes to a raspy whisper, drawing attention to and perfectly befitting the story which is to follow. "I got ossified, you know. One night I got drunk just thinking about

it. In my own house. I just went into the living room and drank me some cognac. Went to take a sip. Took sips." She laughs.

"Before Sarah goes on, she's real nervous," Tilson Thomas explains. "But the minute she's on … ." The words of confidence have little effect on Vaughan, who interrupts with a reminder about her nervousness: "I'm so nervous right now, and I'm always nervous before a show. Barbara McNair made a statement in Jet magazine that people who were nervous before they went on must be insecure. I don't know why she said that. Carmen [McRae] says the same thing. Before I go on, I'm real nervous, and it lasts until I get the reaction from the audience.

"Of course, sometimes it gets worse. People sit out there and stare at you and don't applaud. Then I start shortening up my show because I think they don't enjoy what I'm doing, and I want to get the hell off of there. And then when I come back and sign autographs, they say, 'I've never heard you better.' Then I'm saying, 'Why do you do that to me, you all? I thought you hated me out there.'"

PHOTO BY TOM COPI

"I'm not a jazz singer," Vaughan protested. "I'm a singer."

Her nervousness is again soothed by Tilson Thomas. "Oh, come on now," he says of the new piece they're rehearsing, "just 16 lousy bars."

"That could be 16 messed-up bars," she warns. "I'm gonna have all this music on stage with me, you know."

"Anything you'd like on stage is fine," he says, finally reassuring her with a promise to follow her lead. "You see? No sacrifice is too great for my art."

Such accommodations have not always been at Vaughan's disposal, though she has fought vigorously to maintain control of her artistic life. While her success has been great, affording her a lifestyle of considerable comfort and establishing her as one of popular music's most important singers, she has not attained the superstar status of her more pop-oriented counterparts.

Schuller suggested that her art is too subtle for her "to make it big, really big, like some half-mediocre, punk rock star." Record companies have wished she had less subtlety and greater sales. "That's why I quit recording for five years," Vaughan asserts. "The record companies always wanted me to do something that I didn't want to do. 'Sarah, you don't sell many records,' they'd say, and so 'Broken Hearted Melody' came up. God, I hated it. I did that in the '50s and everybody loves that tune. It's the corniest thing I ever did.

"The 78s I didn't mind too much," she continues, recalling her earliest days of recording. "One side was commercial and you put yours on the other side. Usually the side I picked was the one that sold the record, though." Her telling smile indicates a self-assuredness both of her own artistic abilities and the integrity an audience is sure to detect.

By now, though, Vaughan's recorded efforts have escaped the commercial connotations afforded much of her work in the '50s and '60s. During that time she took critical lumps from the press, which insisted on labeling her a jazz singer. "I'm not a jazz singer," she quickly protests. "I'm a singer. There's a lot of titles of music. There's punk rock, soul-punk rock, rock-jazz, jazz that rocks, jazz that doesn't rock, jazz jazz, jazz minus punk … . I don't know why people call me a jazz singer, though I guess people associate me with jazz because I was raised in it, from way back. I'm not putting jazz down, but I'm not a jazz singer. Betty Bebop [Carter] is a jazz singer because that's all she does. I've even been called a blues singer. I've recorded all kinds of music, but [to them] I'm either a jazz singer or a blues singer.

"I can't sing a blues — just a right-out blues — but I can put the blues in whatever I sing. I might sing "Send In The Clowns," and I might stick a little bluesy part in it, or any song. What I want to do, music-wise, is all kinds of music that I like, and I like all kinds of music. I want to do a country & western record, but I want to do it with my kind of background. I hate country & western the way it's done; it all sounds the same to me, so I want to do my version."

That attitude pervades much of Vaughan's thinking and certainly accounts for her doing programs such as the all-Gershwin show with symphony orchestras. Her other shows these days include a great amount of material from the pop and jazz bags. Future album projects, which she now controls to a great extent, include a desire to do some experimenting, going back to her church roots and maybe even doing a spiritual or two. "My next album for Pablo is going to be called *Crazy And Mixed Up*," she says, laughing at the proposed title and suggesting that her continued efforts are to more solidly establish her as a singer, not just a jazz singer.

Is it a move to a new commercialism? A return to the commercial success she enjoyed during the '50s and '60s? After all, many singers with half of Vaughan's talent enjoy twice as much success. She scoffs at the idea and doesn't concede to any jealousy or resentment of others' success.

"There's no resentment because they have to sing those kind of songs. I don't have to sing those kind of songs," she says, indicating that whatever material to which she would lend her talent now would emerge with the inimitable Sarah Vaughan stamp clearly on it — a stamp which seems to just happen according to the modest singer.

"I never think about singing, I just go out and sing. I never think about the how or the why of it. It's just according to how I feel and it's never the same." A sudden laugh proceeds her telling of what she does think about when she is singing. "You know," she cautions, "sometimes I'm wondering if they fixed the fence, or I wonder if my dog got well. That's why I forget lyrics sometimes."

But she does think about future projects — recording and live — and the idea of working again with some old jazz buddies is always present. "I'd like to do a tour with Basie; that's the only way I'd do a tour for, like, 20 days or something. We did a tour one time," she laughs. "It was for 71 days, and we had one day off in Detroit. That one day came at the end of the tour, and I'm telling you, the next day they were looking for us. There were some drunks. They even found some of them in the curb. We must have drank up all of the whiskey in Detroit. I was just one of the boys in the band," she says fondly.

Her recollection of the Detroit experience reminds her of her own usually hectic schedule. "I haven't been doing much of anything lately. I've been resting, and I'm not used to that. Maybe that's why I'm so tired. But starting tomorrow … let's see … oh, yeah, I've got a rehearsal in the morning, then I fly to Delaware," she says, suddenly getting up to retrieve a manilla envelope with the words "Take to Delaware and New York City!" scrawled on the front. "See? 'Take to Delaware and New York City!' Then I'm going to New York and then to New Jersey. Sunday I come back here and go do the Count Basie thing at that library. Then we rehearse Sunday night and Monday. Monday night and Tuesday night is the Gershwin thing." She sighs. "After that, I forget."

She suddenly recalls another Basie story: "I remember one time we were on the bus with Basie's band, and Billy Eckstine and the guy who worked for him were always playing jokes, pranks. Basie had been out that night and when he got on the bus, he went to sleep. Well, the guys — they had planned this — tied Basie up with these big link chains. They had chains going all around his feet and his neck. They just left him, and he slept all night like that. When he woke up and saw what had happened, he said, 'Damn.' Boy, what fun we had on that bus!"

Sarah Vaughan gets up from the bed and wanders over to the window. The fog obscuring the Valley has lifted, and she points out the lights of a nearby community. She thinks out loud about her career — a career she had always wanted, but hadn't really planned.

"I've been singing all my life, and I've never really thought about anything else since that amateur hour. But I'm the same way now that I was when I was 18. I don't go for that star stuff." From her window vantage point, Sarah points out and up. "All the stars are in heaven." **DB**

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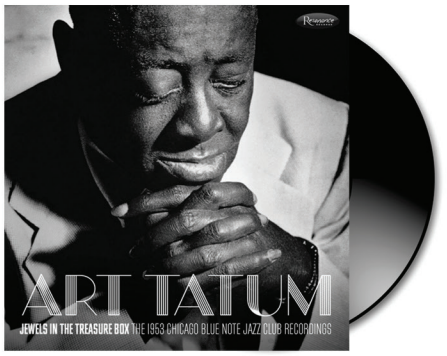

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October 28, 1971

JAN PERSSON

MONK TALK

by Pearl Gonzalez

Thelonious Monk came out from the wings alone and played a bawdy-house blues version of "I Love You" to an audience that didn't want to go home. Later, in the dressing room at Mexico City's Bellas Artes, he was signing autographs between wiping the perspiration from his face while being questioned like a fugitive from Interpol.

"Was that song your way of showing appreciation to the audience?"

"Yes, it was," Monk said. "Been playing it for 20 years and most people don't realize what I'm trying to say. Some of them don't even know the name of the song."

"What do you think the importance of jazz is?"

"It stimulates a lot of music you hear," Monk said. "All music. Everybody in all countries tries to play jazz. All musicians stimulate each other. The vibrations get scattered around."

"How do you select musicians?"

"Just hire them."

"You look tired. Can we continue this tomorrow at your hotel?"

Tomorrow at Monk's hotel in Mexico City

"Where were you born?"

He showed his passport. It said North Carolina, 1917.

"I started playing music," he said as his left foot seemed to be keeping rhythm with unheard music, "when I was 5. I always wanted to play the piano. A lady gave us a piano. The player-piano kind. I saw how the rolls made the keys move. Very interesting. Sounded pret-

ty good to me. I felt I did not want to waste this person's gift, so I learned to use it. I learned how to read music all by myself. My sister used to take piano lessons, like all girls whose brothers take violin lessons. Only I stayed with the piano. I learned the chords and fingering on the piano. I figured it out. I jumped from that to reading. But I had to go further than that. I had a little teaching; you have to have some kind of teaching."

"Did any classical composer have any influence on you?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"You know. Like Bach, Beethoven and so on."

"Oh, you mean Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky and guys like that." He laughed and added: "I only mentioned their names because you're wearing a red jacket."

"Well, did any of them impress you?" I asked after I stopped laughing at the humor of this really sweet, warm man.

"Well, not too much of the classical composers. But the jazz musicians impress me. Everyone is influenced by everybody, but you bring it down home the way you feel it. I've never copied anyone, though; just play music."

"What do you think your sound is?"

"Music."

"Let's face it. You have your own style."

"Face? Is there a face in music? Isn't there a song like that? 'Let's Face the Music'?"

Monk's saxophonist, Paul Jeffrey, was in the room, and the two of us roared along with our cornball friend.

"Where were we?" I asked.

"We were facing the music. Well, you face the public all of the time. And it's something I always wanted to do. No one ever pushed me. If someone wants to play music you do not have to get a ruler or whips to make them practice."

"When was your first professional date?"

"It's so far back." He started laughing and scratching the back of his neck. "Time flies. Let's see. I was playing birthday parties. House-rent parties where they used to sell whisky during prohibition. They'd hire you to play in the house, same as a birthday party. They gave these house-rent parties to pay the rent. Then when Roosevelt came on the scene and brought whisky back, I only played in the summer because I was going to school then. So I'd take a gig during the summer. Then I played in a three-piece band in a cabaret. No, I guess you'd call it a plain bar and grill."

"Was this in North Carolina?"

"No. I left North Carolina when I was 4 years old. My mother didn't want me to grow up in North Carolina, so I grew up in New York City where I kept on playing music. Things kept right on happening. Gigs. Going on one-night gig jobs."

"Did you think about becoming a bandleader?"

"All musicians are potential bandleaders. Do you mean was I considered a professional? Union-wise, I guess."

"How do you feel about your influence on jazz?"

"I'm always surprised people dig it. I'm always surprised if someone requests something special."

'All musicians are subconsciously mathematicians.'

"Where's the first big place you played?"

"You mean capacity? Prestige? Every place can be big; a small place can become the biggest place. Did you ever hear of Minton's Playhouse? No?"

"When did you start to find an individual sound in the world of music?"

"I always believed in being myself. You have to notice and dig what other musicians do, though, even though you don't copy."

"What other interests do you have?"

"Life in general."

"What do you do about it?"

"Keep breathing."

"I hear you don't give out too many interviews, why is that?"

"I can't figure that one out myself. Sometimes I talk, and sometimes I don't feel like talking."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I'd like to know, too."

"Moods?"

"I don't know what makes people talk. Maybe it's whisky. A lot of people talk a lot full of whisky, in other words."

"Is whisky and drugs the atmosphere of musicians?"

"The majority of juice-heads and winos and junkies aren't musicians. Musicians are such a small minority. You have all types of people in all types of professions, like the motion picture actors. They drink. Why do they say this about musicians? These other people are very important in the entertainment world. So most people who do this are not musicians."

"How do you relax?"

"Playing ping pong. Sometimes I play backstage between performances."

"Have you had any problems because you are black?"

"The problems are there before you're born. But you do not have to run into them. It never bothered me. I never thought much about race. I came up in the New York streets. There were all types of people. Every block in New York was a different city. Each block was a different town. Have this on that block and something else on the next block — that's the way it goes. People have gotten killed going to the next block to see their girl!"

"Worth it?"

"All of them are worth it."

"How did you meet Mrs. Monk?"

"You'd better ask her about that."

"How many children do you have?"

"My son, whom you met and who has been playing drums with me for a month. And my daughter's here, too. She's 17 years old. She likes to dance. The family travels a lot with me when they can. My wife always does."

Thelonious Monk Jr. came in and said "hi."

To Jr.: *Hi. Where did you go to school?*
Jr.: Stuyvesant High.

To Monk: *Were you good in mathematics? It's so interwoven in music.*
Monk: All musicians are subconsciously mathematicians.

Q: *What do you feel like when you're writing music?*
Monk: Like I've accomplished something. Feel as if it's a fulfillment. Something's been pulled through.

Q: *Have you written words?*
Monk: Years ago. But they were never put out. Used that type of words expressing — well ...

He looked a little shy, so I noticed the ring on his finger.

Q: *Where'd you get that fabulous ring?*
Monk: It's an opal I got in Hong Kong. We've been to Japan often. Hong Kong once.

Q: *Is that where you got that wild yellow belted silk suit?*
Monk: [*Laughing*] The family had to force me to buy it. I like casual clothes much better. We've given a couple of concerts in Tokyo.

Q: *What about that other ring?*
Monk: I had it made in New York years ago, in the '50s. I designed it. (It's a black onyx with the letters MO on top separated by two large diamonds followed by the letters NK underneath.)

Q: *How do you feel about money?*
Monk: I don't worry about it. I just let the family spend a quarter of it.

Q: *Are you interested in politics?*

Monk: That's all you hear about on the radio.

Q: *What do you think about the Black Panthers?*
Monk: Why don't they call them the Black Leopards?

Q: *Ever think about writing a book?*
Monk: I thought about it because other people brought it to my attention. Coming to a decision is something else. I don't know.

Q: *What do you want to do the rest of your life?*
Monk: I want to enjoy it.

Q: *How?*
Monk: That's what I want to find out from reporters. If you know the best way to enjoy life, I'd like to know. I believe everybody would like to find out.

Q: *How do you feel about God?*
Monk: Why bring religion into it?

Q: *It's part of you, how you feel about it. Are you a religious man?*
Monk: Cool it a while. Don't get me too fast. This is a very religious city, isn't it? Do Catholic priests still have to come in the streets dressed without their habits? I was brought up as a Protestant. I went to a lot of Baptist churches and a lot of Protestant churches, Sunday school and all that. I played piano in church in a choir. I once traveled with an evangelist for a couple of years. It was in the Southwest, and I was a teenager.

Q: *How long did you stay with him?*
Monk: It was a she. I stayed two years. When I came back to New York I started playing jazz. That's when it all started.

Q: *Do you think much about religion now?*
Monk: At all times. You just know everybody goes for religion.

Q: *How do you feel about* Jesus Christ Superstar*?*
Monk: It's a gimmick.
Monk Jr.: It's gone too far for just a gimmick. I think it's healthy. The kids do not accept just anything. This is just another fight of the young.

Q: *How do you feel about that?*
Monk: No comment.
Monk Jr.: The people who are running the church are saying one thing and doing another. Why, the Catholic Church can pay off the national debt.
Monk: How do you know? Have you seen their books?
Monk Jr.: The Catholic Church owns everything inside the Catholic churches and all kinds of property.
Monk: This is a Catholic country, you know.
Monk Jr.: I can't help that. Look at Harlem. The church isn't helping the people. They throw people out. This is not an opinion, Dad, this a fact.
Monk: Well, I'm not a preacher.

Q: *Do you discuss these things at home?*
Monk: All kinds of things come up. Mostly they talk with their mother. You know, I did a gig in the Catholic Church way back, in the Village. Played the same kind of music last night.

Q: *Do you think music reflects its time?*
Jeffrey (enters the conversation): Definitely.
Monk: It's not the same kind of music. You don't have as much fire and enthusiasm. It happens to everybody with age.

Q: *That wasn't exactly my question.*
Monk Jr.: I think more than my dad about what he said. There are changes a man goes through. You don't have to get old with years. You can get old because you get on something.
Jeffrey: Music changes over the years.

Monk: You play the same records and it's not the same.
Jeffrey: As long as you are living, time is going to have effect.
Monk Jr.: Music has to be different because everything is different. We're looking at different horizons.
Jeffrey: Everything publicized is not necessarily good music. The public is fed so much malarky they don't know good music. Different people judge it different ways.
Monk Jr.: The commercial aspects become dominant even in rock and roll.
Monk: Good music is something you enjoy. It's pleasing to you. It's good to your ear. Anything that sounds good to your ear, a nice type of sound, is music.
Monk Jr.: I agree. But I'll go one step further. Good music has a tendency to last.

Q to Monk Jr.: *What are you studying for?*
Monk Jr.: I've graduated a prep school in Darien, Connecticut, and I'm going to study music and continue playing drums.

Charlie Bourgeois calls on the phone, and Monk goes into the bedroom to answer. Bourgeois was managing the Monk group, which was taking part in the International Jazz Festival. Monk came back into the room and said Charlie wanted to talk to me.

Bourgeois: Let the guys out. You can finish the interview on the way to Bellas Artes.

I went back into the living room and announced: "Charlie wants me to let you go to work."

Monk: There's still time. It's only across the street.

"Well, I don't want to be responsible if you guys don't turn up for work, so just one more question."

I got up to put on the red jacket, which Monk helped me with. Then a chambermaid opened the door of the suite and the sound of mariachis was heard.

Monk froze. He listened a while, then put his finger in the air and said: "B flat!" After we recovered, Monk asked what the question was.

Q: *What do you think the purpose of life is?*
Monk: To die.

Q: *But between birth and death, there's a lot to do.*

"You asked a question, that's the answer," he said with his back to me, staring out of the 12th floor that overlooked a valley once conquered by another kind of sound led by a chief with relatively few forces in his band. **DB**

From our FIRST beat MARCH 30, 1961

Charles Mingus

CHARLES MINGUS PRESENTS CHARLES MINGUS—Candid 8005: *Folk Forms, No. 1; Original Faubus Fables; What Love; All the Things You Could Be by Now If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother.*

Personnel: Mingus, bass; Eric Dolphy, alto saxophone, bass clarinet; Ted Curson, trumpet; Dannie Richmond, drums.

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Mingus is a musician of unquestionable power. Many musicians have passed through his Workshop, developing their own personalities en route, yet all his groups have an unmistakable Mingusian thing that ties them all to- an ability to communicate arsenal of emotions.

um was done in a studio, but atmosphere was tried for— the lights were turned down, and Mingus to a non-existent his sardonic humor ese verbal introduc- are really unnecessary. The condi-

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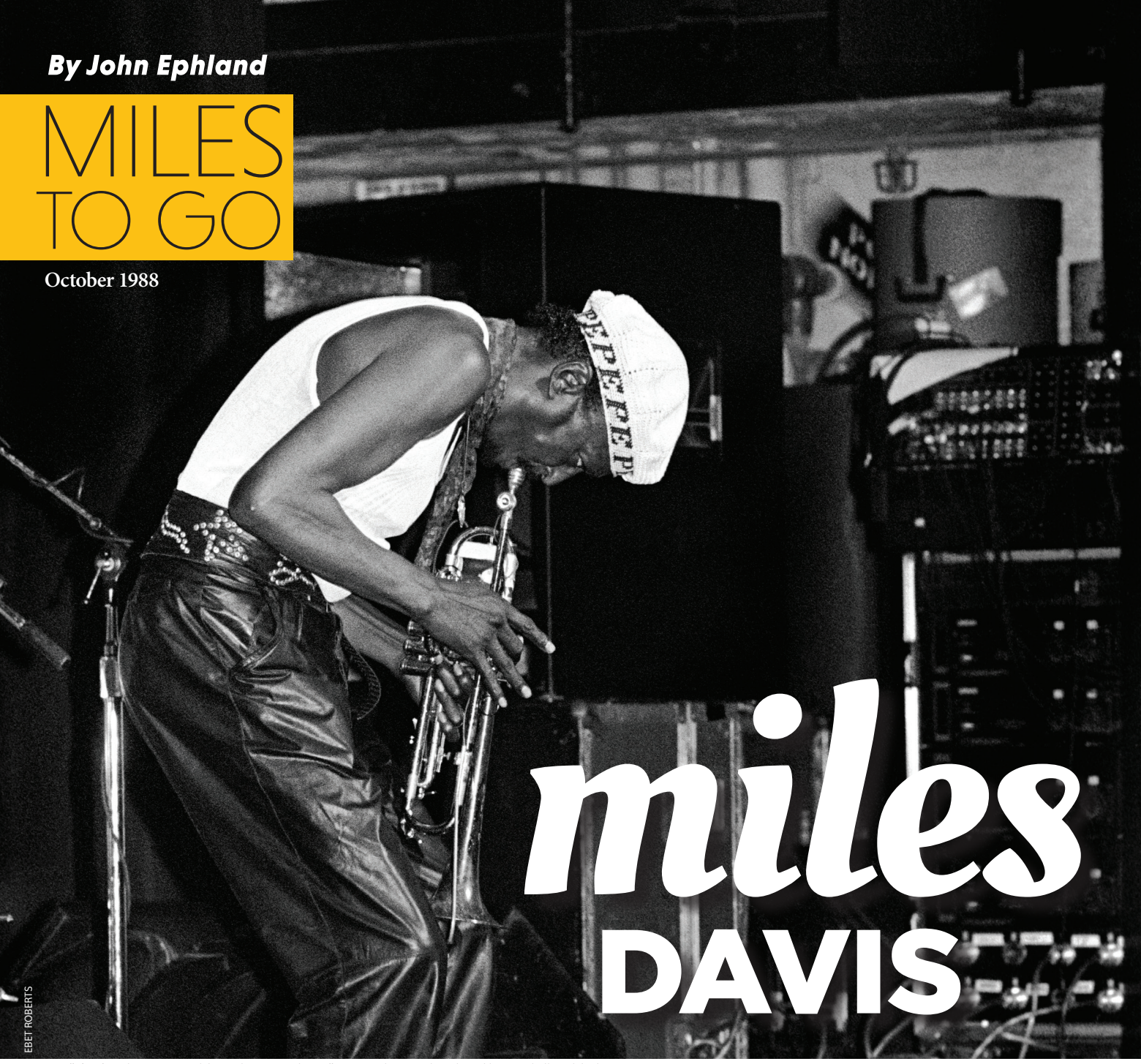
By John Ephland

MILES TO GO

October 1988



miles DAVIS

EBET ROBERTS

"There's nothing wrong with big audiences, you know?" Davis said, noting the only problems are halls with bad acoustics.

"And Terence [Trent] D'arby came up to my room in Milan, callin' me Mr. Davis. He said, 'I carry around *Kind Of Blue*. I play it for inspiration … before I play.'"

Perhaps not everyone knows who the young Mr. D'arby is or the kind of musical success he currently enjoys. He is a musician. "Mr. Davis" is a musician. There is a bridging across generations with Miles Davis. To anyone who has followed his career, if only by glances, his music is synonymous with change and an openness to new styles, new ideas. So it's no wonder that a young musician might find favor in the presence of the Prince of Darkness.

It's been awhile since Miles has graced the pages of DB (December 1984). *Decoy* was then the current rage, topping sales charts in addition to being voted best jazz album by DB readers. (His electric jazz groups won top honors in '85 and '86 with both the readers and the critics.) Another album for Columbia, *You're Under Arrest*, stretched his bandmates even further and included a few guest appearances (ex-sideman John McLaughlin, for one). And then, next thing you know, Miles is recording a "concept" album with a new label, Warner Bros. When was the last time that happened? *Tutu*, complete with full-cover front and back photos of Miles, brought him together with bassist/composer/producer/arranger Marcus Miller in an album that streamlined the music force on hand even as that inimitable trumpet voice continued to shine.

"Synthesizer programming" allowed for more guest artists. And yet, the sound was lean, simply providing as always — "a program, a menu, a guide." If you have seen and heard Miles perform over the past two years (since *Tutu* was released), you know *Tutu* has served its purpose well, in the tradition of other great Miles Davis records: "It goes like this, but it goes farther when we play it, you know?"

Miles' most recent recording, *Siesta*, harkens back to a period when

his love of Spanish music surfaced in a big way-with *Sketches Of Spain*. Rightly dedicated to "The Master," Gil Evans, it continued the pace set by *Tutu*, using a spare lineup of artists alongside synthesizers and trumpet.

Once again, Marcus Miller had a major role, playing along and composing the music as a film score. Although Miles plays on only about half of *Siesta*, when he does, "he doesn't just play solos; he creates moods" (see DB record reviews, April '88). His current band includes Robert Irving Ill and Adam Holzman on keyboards, Kenny Garrett on saxophones and flute, Joseph Foley McCreary on guitar, Benny Rietveld on bass, Marilyn Mazur on percussion and Ricky Wellman on drums.

And it is with this band that Miles continues to tour worldwide even as he receives more awards, shows up on TV, paints/sketches professionally, etc. And, as if all this wasn't enough, his vast catalogue continues to be reissued in record and CD formats.

Miles has a lot to say, with subjects as diverse as Beethoven, performance styles and the impact of Charlie Parker. Read on, and see if you don't agree that the Sorcerer has a few more tricks up his sleeve, and quite a few more miles to go.

JOHN EPHLAND: *Let's talk about your style of performance. You like to move around a lot.*
MILES DAVIS: I walk around all the time because there's different sounds on stage. ... Nobody wants to stand still and play, you know what I mean? It's old-time, man; it's Jim Crow. Not Jim Crow, Uncle Tommish when you go to the microphone and you play and you step back and bow to the audience, like the audience is doing something for them when they are really teachin' the audience.

Ephland: *I think of my wife, who is a dancer, and how she is always drawing comparisons between dance and jazz or improvisational music. Music is movement, particularly improvisational music. So, creatively, your juices are flowing when you're moving.*
Davis: Yeah.

Ephland: *Aren't your ideas coming a lot easier than if you're stationary?*
Davis: Sometimes, like when Trane heard the high sound of a soprano sax, you can pick up the higher sounds like that. It's not too hard, like not as high as a dog. When I first gave Herbie the electric piano, he really loved to play it 'cause Herbie would try anything. But Keith Jarrett, I got him an organ and an electric piano. He used to play them for me like this [*demonstrates moving around*]. Same thing when I'm walkin' around that they do.

Ephland: *Standing still?*
Davis: Yeah.

Ephland: *And it's different for a drummer because a drummer, in a sense, is rotating on that stool; they've got all four limbs moving if they're really doing it.*
Davis: Marilyn [Mazur], my drummer, she dances around when she plays. And Ricky, my drummer Ricky [Wellman], he's just as steady as, he's a bull; he can play two hours, then take a solo. But I'm sayin', I know George Duke walks around and he plays his ass off.

Ephland: *Speaking of Trane, there's a phrase I've read that you used in connection with him: "that thing." It was something subjective that you used when you heard something, and it was the kind of sound that you wanted in your musicians.*
Davis: It's the thing that connects the melody with another melody, that shows a musician, that shows himself, you know; and it also shows me what he knows and what he doesn't know. For instance, Coleman Hawkins, the way he plays "Body And Soul," that's an old record, and when Frank Sinatra used to phrase, he taught me how to phrase. …

Ephland: *He taught you how to phrase?*
Davis: Yeah, when Frank Sinatra sings, when I was at an early age, "Night And Day," the way he phrases; the way Orson Welles used to phrase, the way Orson Welles used to speak, the heavy accent that would stop short. Orson Welles had a way of speaking, it was like care. Most didn't know I have that. That's what I liked about him.

Ephland: *All the people that you have mentioned were before this kind of mobile stage presence-type thing. For example, Coleman Hawkins or John Coltrane, when they would play, they would do that old thing where you go to the mic and solo, right?*
Davis: Well, you know the way John played, it was, all the stuff he played was throwin' him off-balance anyway. So it didn't matter whether he was standin' in front of the mic or what. And sometimes I can't remember him even goin' to the microphone or him bein' in the vicinity of the microphone. But not like old musicians with bebop clichés and stuff. Dizzy just asked me, called me up the other day and said, "I gotta get me one of those microphones you got on your horn."

Ephland: *He doesn't have one yet?*
Davis: No, he's been askin' me that for six months. I thought he had it. Well, I hooked it up for him, you know.

Ephland: *One last question about Coltrane. How did you follow his later music on Impulse? Say, from* A Love Supreme *on?*
Davis: I never did hear his records after, you know, after he left the band.

Ephland: *Did you follow his career much and the kind of music he was into?*
Davis: It was the same thing. It was the same thing playin' with me. I don't like, I didn't like the piano player.

Ephland: *McCoy [Tyner]?*
Davis: I don't like all that bangin', you know? I like a piano player that gets a sound out of the piano. Like a baby grand; gettin' a sound out of a baby grand like Bill Evans and people like that, and Herbie and Chick and George Duke. They know how to play the piano by itself and make it sound like a piano. I don't like guys who make a livin' playin' in the mode.

Ephland: *Playing in the mode?*
Davis: Yeah. We just did it because it's one style. You know, you can play the whole set like that … who could play after Coltrane? He played everything in the mode, you know, and McCoy just used to bang around, and I couldn't stand that.

Ephland: *What were you looking for that wasn't there, that wasn't happening with McCoy's playing?*
Davis: He just didn't have any touch, you know? There's nothin' there. ... The way he played with John, he kept the vamp goin', then he got monotonous. I know how Trane played, it would get monotonous if you'd sit there a long time. Even though it's a style; only he could do that and make it work. You know, when they played [*sings/hums a little of "My Favorite Things"*], what is that?

Ephland: *"My Favorite Things"?*
Davis: Yeah. Only he could play that. There's some of those that I did just because of the way he plays. I used to give him sets of chords to play — three, and five, six chords in one bar, two bars, 'cause he always could do 'em. And to hear McCoy bang around like that … . This is only my opinion, what I like to hear. I couldn't see nothin' there. I could see Elvin Jones. Also, they didn't have a good bass player. Nobody else but him.

Ephland: *So you'd say their best stuff was the duets? When John and Elvin would get off on just the two of them playing?*
Davis: Yeah, that's what I would want to hear.

Ephland: *You've made a lot of records. What is the value of recordings, beyond the immediate use of live material for possible new ideas? I've read that you're not all that interested in your older records.*
Davis: It's like a program. It's like a menu, when you go out — say, "Here's *Tutu*, here's what they're gonna play. But, it ain't gonna sound like

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE JAZZ DE MONTREAL

"Most white people used to think, and the critics used to think, that black people just picked up this instrument and they did it because they all have rhythm," Davis said. "It's not so."

that. See, here's what they're gonna play, this is a guide, this is *Tutu*." It goes like this but it goes farther when we play it, you know? That's all it is. Is that what you're talkin' about?

Ephland: *Let me say it a different way. Say, for example, you talk about* Miles Smiles.
Davis: Which one is that?

Ephland: *The album,* Miles Smiles*?*
Davis: I can't remember it.

Ephland: *OK. What value is there in having records around except for people who want to listen to the kind of stuff that you were listening to back then? In 10 years, is* Tutu *something you'll be glad was recorded?*
Davis: Yeah.

Ephland: *You'd go back and listen to it?*
Davis: Yeah. You can always listen to it, is what I'm sayin'. When you play in person, *Tutu* is only a guide for what we might do. It's different on every take. A record, you can't do anything, man. ... They should look at it like a program for a concert, like what we might play. All the rest is a composition.

Ephland: *What about the whole "neo-classic" jazz scene?*
Davis: What is "neo-classic"?

Ephland: *I guess that's a critic's term. Take what someone like Miles Davis did in the mid- to late-'60s, an all-acoustic jazz format, and 20 years later with a new group of players. You've dropped the all-acoustic format and have some very strong artistic reasons for doing so.*
Davis: Like I said, one thing is because I don't like to walk up and take a bow.

Ephland: *Right. Electronics free you up.*
Davis: Well, you can hear better with electronics, the audience can hear better. They can hear every little thing that we have set up. They can hear everything. Listen to this [*takes out portable tape player, offers headset to me to hear a tape of their recent live music*]. Can you hear that?

Ephland: *I can hear what they're playing.*
Davis: You can hear it's separated. This was last night. You can hear everything, everybody's portion.

Ephland: *Yeah. It's not muddy.*
Davis: Yeah. You know acoustic players, if you're not in the same room with 'em, you can't hear 'em. You can't hear the bass, you can't hear the piano, you can hear the drums; sometimes they're off-balance. If it was acoustic, there'd be no microphone, not at all. But if you're gonna put a mic by the drums, one in the piano, one in front, and maybe another one for the saxophone player, one in front of the bass — it might as well be electric. That's what it is anyway .

Ephland: *You're not playing in somebody's room. You're playing for an audience.*
Davis: Yeah, for 4,000 people, 3,000 people. ... And people, television, people have seen faces, half-smiles, cheap smiles, half applause [*claps faintly*], you know? Expressions and movements that mean "I'm sorry," or "Yes." … They know when they look at you what is real or whether you're just bein' pretentious, or doin' this because you're really in the music. They can hear the notes, they can hear everything. They can look at you, and when you play acoustic, I mean, they could tell how awkward you must feel. They could see that, see your carriage. Don't you know when a guy wants to fight you? And don't you know when he's afraid or when he's not afraid? You've seen cheap smiles on faces on TV. You know when you do this [*makes a gesture of a phony facial expression*].

Ephland: *Yeah. There's another job goin' on just to be on stage.*
Davis: Yeah. Well, you know, if you could hear it, you know you're givin' it to 'em, you don't have to do that. The applause, if they don't like it, they don't like it. And they usually do like it if you spend some time doin' it. You can tell the hard ones, why it's takin' some time.

Most white people used to think, and the critics used to think, that black people just picked up this instrument and they did it because they all have rhythm. It's not so. A lot of people do a lot of workin' in music. You can tell Herbie put a lot of work into the piano. Ahmad Jamal. … I can't see that in some piano players. If [Herbie] can prepare, then he can make you like what he wrote in 1988, or the way he plays in 1988. In 1944, he couldn't play like that — 'cause, in the first place, the police didn't like black musicians, 'cause they thought they stole all the white women. Like what Orson Welles did at the Mercury Theater and scared everybody. Now you can't scare people, no matter what you do, you know? People are too hip now. Everybody's got as much music as I know. Even if they're not playin' it.

Ephland: *What if they are playin' it?*
Davis: Well, you know that. … OK, we played last night, Adam [Holzman] got up to play. I had to tell Adam, "In the first place, you're white. And white guys take long phrases. So you gotta be aware of what you can do. Don't start somethin' black and can't finish it, you know? Play what you can play. Don't try to do like what you see somebody else do. So, you know, set up the background so we can play comfortably." You gotta get rid of your ego. Nobody's gonna look at you and say, "That was a nice sound." You see the piano players in my band, and synthesizers, them motherf**kers have a habit of just turnin' it up real loud so that people can know what they're playin'. … But in order to do that, you have to learn how to play like that. You know, you just can't say, "Let me play."

Ephland: *Yeah. It's not just going to come out.*
Davis: Well, it's accordin' to what you learned. Adam used to tell me, "Guess what I'm learnin' in my class." And it's still the old stuff that they're

teachin'. The bebopper stuff. I told Adam, "Even if you have to get somebody else's personality, borrow it from him." You know what I mean? Like, if I'm gonna play basketball, I'm gonna do it like Magic Johnson. You know? It's not yours, but at least you're doin' like he is. And pretty soon it might get to be yours.

Ephland: *Is that something you followed when you were first coming up?*
Davis: Yeah ... I've always wanted to play like Dizzy or ... shit, there's so many guys ... there's 10 f**kin' trumpet players; you gotta follow what you like about 'em. … If you gonna be a player and you wanna solo, you gotta get the great soloists and see why they did certain things, you know? See where they come from. If they're comin' from Texas, or did they have a Baptist upbringing.

Most soul singers sung in church. That's why they sound like that. They ad lib off the notes, which is flamenco music, the scale, like Arabic music, like Jewish folk songs and stuff. Gypsies. That's like Baptists. Most white singers sing straight. They're just gettin' to play like soul music, you know. They copy, they borrowed sounds.

Ephland: *So, when you talk about soloing, do you just mean improvising?*
Davis: Yeah.

Ephland: *How does that fit in with the players in your band that may not have the links to the history of jazz, that would give them that kind of tradition or basis?*
Davis: They have to find out what they like. Say I'm a piano player, so if I had any sense at all, I would have to go with Herbie, Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett. Herbie can't play like Keith, and Chick can't play like Keith. Nobody plays like Keith. Chick can't play like Herbie, but Herbie might be able to play like Chick; I doubt it because Chick plays like he would play drums. He uses his hands and he can only play one tempo, you know. Like the way I like to hear him. And that's, a medium tempo like this. [*gestures*] And the reason he can play like that, at that tempo, is 'cause he makes up his mind. With that tempo you have to make up your mind right away. You know, you can't be thinkin' of bein' cute.

Ephland: *It was a different thing back then, when you first started with more than one keyboard player and it was Herbie or Chick or Keith or Joe Zawinul. And that was a different scene than it is now with more than one keyboard player. Or is it the same? Are we talking about the same kind of thing?*
Davis: No, you're talkin' about two different things. You're talkin' about orchestration and composition. I'm talkin' about what would a guy do to be a soloist. He has to copy either one of those three.

Ephland: *But were those guys doing that when they hit your band or did they come into it like you were working with Herbie?*
Davis: I remember he was playin' like Bud Powell. Tryin' to play like Bud, but to his technique he started adding, doing, like Bud and somethin' else, he played a style. He also, we introduced him to playin' like Ahmad Jamal, fakin' like that on a ballad, it's a medium tempo ballad. All three of them play the shit out of ballads. And that's where you can tell they do their own sound. And it's also like Art Tatum.

You have to go past all those great soloists like Art Tatum. And you got that honky tonk music, boogie woogie, Lux Lewis, things like that. They're doin' it now. Like Huey Lewis and the News, that's all that is [*hums a few bars of one of their recent songs*]. That sound is honky tonk music. I heard a lot of it lately. "The thing of rock & roll" ... "The Heart Of Rock & Roll!" [*continues to hum a few bars of the same song*] Honky tonk players play it.

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PAUL NATKIN

Miles Davis meets a young Wynton Marsalis backstage after a performance.

rubs off on you whether you like it or not. All the television shows, all the MTV, and all the black soul sound. And when you write music, it's gotta seep in. It's gotta be like that. You know? That's what the Top 10 says — that everybody's alike. Those that aren't in the Top 10, you probably get some good music. Beethoven was one of the Top 10. Not the best, but one of the favorites. … In Beethoven's era, it was like the Top 10.

You know, five composers that played what the queen would like, what the king would like. But the ones that they didn't like had a new sound, you know? They probably sounded like John Cage. [*laughs*] They say, "We can't use that, we can't do no waltzes." ... It's just havin' an open mind. You just can't say, "I'm gonna be like him." "I'm gonna be better than him." You can't get in that kind of thing. … The reason you say you can do it is because whoever does it does it so good that it's it. You know? But when you leave them and you don't hear it, you can't do it. Like if you look at a painting, like cubism, man, you know, and you say, "Oh yeah!" But if you hadn't seen a cube, it wouldn't have been there. Bob Berg, I used to tell, "Bob, why do you play in this spot? You' not supposed to play this spot." He said, "It sounded so good, Chief, I had to play it." I said, "The reason it sounded so good is because you wasn't playin'." As soon as he jumps in, he f**ks it up. It's a hard thing playin' with a group.

Ephland: *Is that related to your counsel on "Play what's not there?" That's the flip side?*
Davis: I was only sayin' that sometime when you look at another form of art that you can see, maybe a guy wants to play out of key for about four or five bars . . . sometimes you see something so bold with your eyes that you say, "Why can't I play what I hear?" You know? "Why should I be afraid to play that?"

Ephland: *Well, is it? Why is that? Because of the ego?*
Davis: That's the critics. Critics do that to a musician. [The musicians] want to impress the critics. Herbie, we used to go to Germany. I hate to go to Germany with Herbie.

Ephland: *'Cause Germany means something to Herbie?*
Davis: Well, his wife is from Germany, and there are a lot of good musicians in Germany. Piano players have discipline. They say, "You must practice eight hours." Herb pulls back his sleeves and shit, and he plays a whole f**kin' concert, a concerto off of "My Funny Valentine." ... But the drive that he [the white critic] gives a black man is to try to strive to be good. But it's also an Uncle Tom way of thinkin'. It's like a white collar Uncle Tom. You know, "I wear a tie and shirt 'cause I'm comin' downtown to shop, and I don't want anybody to think I'm stealin'." So they dress up. It's also a bad way to go into music. Some people who go in like that are very good musicians, but that's it. They have no ideas.

Ephland: *No heart?*
Davis: Yeah. They just play for …

Ephland: *They're playing for other people instead of for themselves?*
Davis: Well, they're playin' so a white critic will like 'em, you know?

Ephland: *Black critics are like that?*
Davis: I don't know any black critics.

Ephland: *Critics are making musicians always look over their shoulders?*
Davis: They usually do, you know. I know a couple of guys that really ... one time I had Jimmy Cobb, and a critic said he sounded like he had an axe in his hand. Which sometimes he did. But what he really didn't notice was that Jimmy used to drop tempo a lot of times, you know. Maybe he didn't know what to say. Constructive criticism. He should've said, "I didn't mean nothin'." But a day later, the critic came down to see us and Jimmy said, "There's that motherf**ker. I ought to go punch him in the mouth." A critic'll do that. A second thought goin' in your head.

Ephland: *Do critics have a place?*
Davis: They have a place, yeah. But, it's just that the musician shouldn't cater to 'em. If your own peers don't tell you how sad you are, the critic can't tell you, you know? A lot of times a critic says, "That sounds good," and you think it sounds like shit. But it's individual taste. And it does destroy a lot of careers.

Ephland: *And that's why it's important to hove a musical community? Where people talk to each other?*
Davis: Yeah.

Ephland: *Nobody's out there in a race with each other. Other artists are not competition. They are fellow artists. I mean, that mentality wasn't there back in the '40s and '30s when Lester Young would come to Kansas City and try and blow out Coleman Hawkins. Is that a game that critics made up?*
Davis: No. But that's the trouble about it. ... He told me about Coleman Hawkins and his old lady.

Ephland:: *Who did?*
Davis: Lester Young. We went on a tour together. He said he been waitin' on Coleman to come to Kansas City a long time. But his old lady was, "Where you goin'?" Can you imagine that? Coleman's in town and he's got his horn. Ready to go out. So he knocked her down and went out. And when he came back he [made love to her].

Ephland: *So where's that at in the context of musical community?*
Davis: Because they want to play together. Usually guys who want to play together get ideas from each other.

Ephland: *They were playing together. They weren't seeing each other as competition in a bad sense.*
Davis: Yeah, it was competition.

Ephland: *But in a good sense.*
Davis: Yeah. They both played two different styles. Bean [Hawkins] could never play like that. I used to rehearse the band. In those days, guys jammed together, you got ideas. Lionel Hampton wasn't the only guy throwing sticks on the floor. That came from St. Louis. When I was there, guys used to play like that. If a band wanted a show drummer, they'd come through St. Louis.

Fats Navarro and I used to play together. He'd come get me and we'd go downtown and jam. You know, we'd go to Minton's and jam and we'd start soundin' alike when we were jammin'. And away from each other we'd play our own thing.

Ephland: *Bird picked up a lot of his ideas from other people that came through K.C. before he split for New York.*
Davis: He had to. If you listen to Ben Webster, you can hear Bird. You can hear the same breaks, like in "Cottontail" and "C Jam Blues." It sounds just like Bird. And Ben was a supporter of Bird when people and critics didn't know what to write. You know, didn't know if he was a fluke. I was a young man then, and I know that movement was goin' on.

Ephland: *The critics were confused?*
Davis: They were confused between Earl Bostic's speed and Jimmy Dorsey's, the way he played alto. … But Bird wasn't in any competition at all. He was just one of those things that happen every 100 years. I mean, he could do anything. He was a complete musician. He was just like Art Tatum. Art Tatum heard one of those player pianos with two people playin'. He thought it was one.

Ephland: *And so, that's what he went with.*
Davis: Right. But Bird was just one of those people. And Duke Ellington. During Coleman Hawkins' time they had, just before with Fletcher Henderson, Horace Henderson, Duke Ellington, they used to write an encore for the saxophone. … When bands used to play together they'd try . . . well, this isn't subtle at all, but they would have a battle of the bands; used to see the most difficult saxophone section solos. Not solos, but sections. Playin' an out chorus. Which is like what Ralph Burns wrote for Woody — "Four Brothers"; they used to do that all the time.

Ephland: *And that was a capella?*
Davis: No. With the rhythm section. Horace Henderson's band. Fletcher Henderson and his brother and the arrangements they used to have. You can look back at Duke's old arrangements — they always had saxophone out choruses, you know? [*does some riffing*] "Cottontail." Doin' this they were soundin' like Bird. [*more riffing*]

And Bird's followers were dancers. That's the reason they played in two-part phrases. The time step was like [*demonstrates*]. You know it was like two-bar phrases. That's the way you get that style. But he had about four or five styles. He had a style like that [*gets up and does a tap step*]. You've seen it [*a "Tea For Two" step*], but fast. He wrote like that. [*He sings along with the step, to "Moose The Mooche."*] "Moose The Mooche" is like that. Free phrases. The way he writes it, it was different.

When he first played it, Lucky Thompson put his saxophone down and started laughin'. He said, "Look at this." The notation was so different. That's all the music Lucky had read, it wasn't like that [*more "Moose"*]. You know, the accents comin' more differently. And now you have Prince, the way Prince writes. First beat and the third. Things that happen here that really hold it together. Like last night, I told our drummer, I said, "Marilyn," I told both of them, "I want something that hangs together." [*He counts off a four-beat measure, accenting the first and third beats.*]

Ephland: *Kind of like a variation on a reggae beat?*
Davis: No, it's just somethin' that would hang a rhythm section together. You know, say like it's tiltin' a little bit and the rhythm section has a little wrinkle in it; you can do that, you can always pull it together. [*Counts off, again accenting first and third beats.*] It's not reggae. It comes from that, it comes from 4/4. Reggae's like a half. [*counts off half-step beats*]

Ephland: *It's a shuffle, almost like a tap dance?*
Davis: Like a half-shuffle.

Ephland: *Getting back to playing, do you like the festival scene, the big crowds vs. the club days?*
Davis: There's nothing wrong with big audiences, you know? The only thing wrong is some halls, like Avery Fisher, the sound floats. And some of 'em, like — where did we play? — we played somewhere, and there was an echo, there was like a big [*makes echo sound*]. That's all we'd use. It'd be funny, and we'd play around with it, play with it. But there's nothin' wrong with a good audience.

Ephland: *So, is there anything to be gained from playing a small club anymore? Is there anything you miss about playing a small club?*
Davis: Yeah, the closeness, you know? You can hear each other and you get a better feelin'. When you're like tight, you know.

Ephland: *What do you have planned ahead?*
Davis: I want to play music, try and get it on record. But in a live format ... 'cause live records are so great. You can feel the enthusiasm and everything, you know? And like I said, a record is only like a program. "This is what they might play, and it might sound like this. If it's worse, it would sound like this." But, there are so many pluses when you play in-person. … You'd be surprised how different the band sounds with Marilyn and Benny. It's like a perfect marriage, you know. Marilyn is like a whole drummer. I have yet to tell her what to do. … A drummer like her, she's a woman and she moves around when she plays; she knows when the shit don't fit 'cause she can't feel it, you know? She's a helluva drummer, man. And Benny plays on top of the beat.

Ephland: *You never went back to an orchestral setting. Have you thought about that much?*
Davis: I did one in Copenhagen. Yeah, this year. *Aura*. It was the last one I did for Columbia. I got his Soning award. It's like $10,000. It's an award that a guy set up. A rich guy in Copenhagen, I guess, Sweden. Leonard Bernstein, Isaac Stern and myself [have] gotten it. So I went over there. And of course they wanted me to play. So, I played and I accepted the award. The radio band played.

Ephland: *Conceptually, what's happening?*
Davis: Well, Palle Mikkelborg wrote this composition that shows what I've done from ... the styles I've played up 'til now. And he made a scale out of my name. And that's where I met Marilyn. We had about four drummers up there, 10 trumpets, we had a full brass section, saxophone stuff. About 20 pieces. So Palle, he wrote this composition, a helluva composition. I left Columbia. It was my last album.

Ephland: *When was it recorded?*
Davis: About three years ago.

Ephland: *And it's been in the can ever since?*
Davis: When I left Columbia, I went to the National Endowment for the Arts, 'cause they would pay for the last, to make an additional recording, which was $1,400. … And they [Columbia] wasn't interested, so I did it with some of my own money. And that's one of the reasons I left them.

Ephland: *They were holding back?*
Davis: Well, one reason. They didn't put out "Time After Time," which I told 'em I'd done two years before they put it out. ... Anyway, I left. Gotta good deal with Warner Bros. … One of the greatest Rock 'n' Roll records they [Columbia] ever heard was *Jack Johnson*, which it is. It's a motherf**ker, you know? It just happened. I wrote it for Buddy Miles. But they buried it. Like, under "Film Music." Instead of puttin' it out and puttin' some thought into it, you know? You can give 10 minutes to anything and, think about it, it'd be better than what it is. **DB**

TERI BLOOM

An Easy Marriage of Styles

McCoy Tyner & Michael Brecker

By Martin Johnson

It's hard to believe, but pianist McCoy Tyner and saxophonist Michael Brecker, pillars on the scene for decades, had never played together until a gig a year ago at Yoshi's in Oakland (see Caught April '95). That evening revealed a deep rapport and good chemistry that can be heard on Tyner's *Infinity* (Impulse!), which features the finest playing both men have documented in several years (see CD Reviews October '95).

It is no exaggeration to say that Tyner is a living legend. His piano work helped elevate the John Coltrane Quartet of the early '60s into one of the finest jazz groups ever heard. In the three decades hence, Tyner has established perhaps the most widely imitated approach to his instrument, a hearty romanticism powered by a huge orchestral sound. Along with his DB Readers and Critics Poll-winning big band, he continues to perform with his trio of bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Aaron Scott.

For Brecker, fame and critical recognition have been a little overdue. He made a name for himself in the '70s both as co-leader with his brother, trumpeter Randy, in the Brecker Brothers and as a sideman of choice for highbrow pop recordings. He has maintained a balance of sideman pop and jazz work as well as working as a leader and for last three years with his brother again.

Although frequently associated with fusion, his brawny yet cerebral style is straight outta the jazz tradition. Perhaps his lack of recognition illustrates how many jazz buffs prefer to listen with labels instead of their ears.

When Tyner and Brecker met one afternoon at the Steinway showroom in midtown Manhattan, a number of contrasts were immediately apparent. Tyner walks slowly with a regal bearing, Brecker moves quickly, and even when relaxed looks like he has a lot on his mind. But despite some obvious physical and demographic differences, they have a lot in common. They are both thoughtful men who measure their words very carefully and enjoy talking about music without dishing dirt. Once they settled in, the kind of rapport emerged that makes *Infinity* so delightful.

Martin Johnson: *What attracted the two of you to the project?*

McCoy Tyner: Well, I've always liked Michael's playing. But I really wasn't sure he was from Philly [*looking at Brecker with a wry raised eyebrow, both laugh*] until he gave me a rundown, and I said, "Oh, OK." There are so many musicians from Philly that it's unbelievable! We had that in common and ... well, I've been influenced by John [Coltrane] a lot, too. So I thought it would be an easy marriage of styles. I think he has an individual voice and plays very sincerely. I was influenced by Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, and you can hear a little bit of that influence in my playing; but I think that I still have my own voice.

Johnson: *Michael, how did you feel about it when approached by McCoy?*

Michael Brecker: It's something I dreamt about for a long time. It's hard to explain.

For me, it's more than the fact that I'm influenced by McCoy and John Coltrane. I think the quartet was the reason I became a musician. …

Tyner: Hmmm, that's interesting.

Brecker: And that was sort of characterized by the fact the group went beyond the strength of John Coltrane. The group consisted of four musicians and was a marriage that transcended the individual musicians. It was a powerful and musical and spiritual force. I felt it was one of the strongest, if not the strongest, group of the century, along with one or two of the Miles bands, and, just talking off the top of my head, maybe Duke Ellington. I was so strongly influenced by McCoy's playing. I never thought we would get to play together; I don't know why …

Tyner: … See, you never know. [*laughs*]

Brecker: So when the chance came, of course, I jumped at it. And the only way to characterize it is that it's the most comfortable I've ever felt in any context.

Tyner: We had lotsa fun. Yoshi's was … [*trails off and smiles, deferring back to Brecker*]

Brecker: It started the very first night, it was a tremendous amount of fun. [*McCoy giggles*] It's led us to do a couple of different types of gigs, things that should be strange.

GENE MARTIN

"People leave the planet but their styles remain here. They're here in spirit," said McCoy Tyner of playing the music of John Coltrane with Michael Brecker.

Johnson: *What do you mean by different types of gigs?*

Brecker: We played at a trade convention and had a great time. Not a regular audience, a lot of folks from MCA [the parent company of Impulse!].

Johnson: *Whose idea was it to do "Impressions"?*

[*Both look at each other, unsure of the answer.*]

Tyner: I think it was you [*to Michael*]. I had done it on *Remembering John*. I think you suggested it.

Johnson: *Either of you fearful of inviting the ghost of Coltrane?*

Tyner: [*looks at Michael*] You want to answer that?

Brecker: No, you try.

Tyner: Well [*smiling*], to tell you the truth, there's one thing I realized. We can never recapture anything, because it [the world] is always changing. It's always different. People leave the planet but their styles remain here. They're here in spirit. What I'm saying is that to try and duplicate anything doesn't make any sense. That's the reason why when I left John, Jimmy [Garrison] and Elvin [Jones] were ready to leave, and they said, "Let's play as a trio." I said, "No," because it's like a tree, your roots are there but you branch off. What I'm doing is like an extension of what I did with them. It's 1995, and I'm still drawing strength from those roots. The deeper the roots, the higher the tree can grow. I love my roots, but, by the same token, you have to continue to grow, and try to create new ideas, but John is always present. Like Charlie Parker, he's there, and that's good. People still remember them, and you work to keep their ideas alive.

Johnson: *And how did you feel approaching it as a saxophonist?*

Brecker: Um … [*pausing*] I didn't think about it in terms of how I was going to approach it. It just so happens that I'm very strongly influenced by John Coltrane. Very much so, too, by Joe Henderson, Sonny Rollins. Those are the three, as far as saxophone players go, dominant forces, the roots of my playing. Then there is other stuff that has grown out of that. When I get up and play with McCoy, I just play. I don't think, "I don't want to sound like this." Harmonically, it has worked out wonderfully, I don't have to think about it.

Tyner: [*murmuring*] He sounds like himself, let's put it like that. That sums it up. Even with all those influences. [*clearing his throat and projecting*] Even in my case, I had a chance to meet Bud Powell, he's from Willowbrook, Pennsylvania, and he lived right around the corner from me at one point. Thelonious Monk and Art Tatum have been major influences, but I came up with something of my own. Even though someone may open the door, you have to walk in yourself.

Brecker: Well, it almost goes without saying, but McCoy has such a strong influence on the piano that it's pretty much changed the way the instrument is played. He's changed the piano harmonically forever, and that's a remarkable thing.

Johnson: *Because of your influential role, do you find it difficult to listen to younger players for fear of hearing an aspect you did not want to see repeated?*

Tyner: I hear influences from what I've done, but I hear their own individual personality, because when you're young you're still developing. It's the same with me when I was with John. I was lucky to be in an environment where I could grow and let my own sound come out. That's what I hear in the young players, some of them seem to be working hard to be individualists. If I could play a part in that, then I'm very thankful. I'm very happy to see that some of the young people I've influenced are working hard to create their own sound. It's funny, someone opens the door for you, then you open the door for someone else, and pretty soon you have an open house!

JOHN SAND

"It's the most comfortable I've ever felt in any context," Michael Brecker said of playing with McCoy Tyner.

Johnson: *Let's come back to* Infinity. *Was it a mutual decision to do "I Mean You"?*
Tyner: One of the things I like best about the whole feeling behind this project is that a tune can come, and we'll just do it. It doesn't really matter who suggested it. We were looking in Monk's book and we said, "Hey, this might be a good tune." I had recorded previously with [John] Scofield. When things are right, they just stick out; it [the tune] just announced itself, really.

Johnson: *And "Good Morning Heartache"?*
Tyner: I've been playing that for a while, and I've loved it. I heard Billie Holiday sing it and ... [*waves his hand in amazement*]. I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the song. I think I played it a long time ago, then stopped, then I started playing it solo.

Johnson: *Is that when you began picking up the tempo toward the end?*
Tyner: Yeah.

Johnson: *You've had a trio together for many years now. Has it been difficult to maintain the continuity?*
Tyner: No, I believe in that. I was with John for six years, and you become like family during that time. You can draw on that, it gives you a chance to grow and develop.

Johnson: *Speaking of growing up and developing, tell me how did the Philadelphia scene differ given the decade between y'all?*
Brecker: When I came up in Philly, there wasn't that much of a scene left. There were a couple of clubs; I did a lot of playing in people's houses and after-hours clubs, strangely enough, and I don't know if any of those are still there. But some of the people we have in common are still around. I grew up in the suburbs of North Philly. I come from a musical family, that's how it all started with me. By the time I was in high school, I started meeting a lot of people in the jazz community in Philadelphia, a lot of great players. It's phenomenal to me, and no one's ever been able to explain how Philly has produced so many great musicians. A lot of great musicians continue to come out of Philadelphia in spite of the fact that there are not a whole lot of places to play.
Tyner: I grew up in a basically Black community, but it was a community, people were concerned with each other. I didn't have a piano from age 13 to 14 — I started [playing] when I was 13. People in the neighborhood let me use their pianos. I'd alternate between three neighbors, and they were very encouraging. I'm so glad I grew up in Philly. To me, at that time, Philadelphia was a nice place to live.

It had a nice domestic scene, but it had a nightlife, too. We had major jazz clubs. There were plenty of gigs for guys that played. A guy could open up a bar and put a piano in. He was supposed to have a music license, but he could get that later, once he saw how it worked. I worked in little clubs, Ridge Avenue ...
Brecker: Ridge Avenue? Yeah.
Tyner: There were lots of gigs, especially on weekends. It was a great scene, and there was a lot of enthusiasm about playing and jams; we had jam sessions at people's houses. That was common. "Jam in North Philly, let's go." You would have Lee Morgan, Archie Shepp, Reggie Workman and the Heath brothers. There was a lot of enthusiasm and people were serious about music.

Things have changed a bit, though there are still great musicians there, but then the town had a special feeling.
Brecker: I agree.

Johnson: *You wrote several of the songs on the record on the way back from a West African music festival. What was it about the trip that inspired you?*
Tyner: I wrote some of it while I was there, particularly in Dakar. What I do sometimes is wait until a project comes up, and I start writing. I have a tendency to do that. Sometimes I write out of pure inspiration. "Fly With The Wind" I wrote at a date in Cleveland. I went by the club in the daytime and sat down at the piano and wrote. Most of the time it's all there, I just need something to make it come out.

Johnson: *McCoy, has Africa been more inspirational for you than any other place? One of my favorite records of yours is* Asante.
Tyner: It's really funny; when I was growing up in Philadelphia there was a cultural affiliation through the community with Africa. We had a big parade for [scholar and Ghanaian founding father] Kwame Nkrumah. I've always been interested in African culture, really all international culture, period. I travel all over the world, and it's so nice to be in the company of people who have different cultures. I take a particular interest in African culture because it's in me and it's reflected in a lot of my songs.

Johnson: *You work mostly with the trio.*
Tyner: Most of the time. I do big band dates in Europe from time to time, but only a couple of times here in the States. It's expensive, and I don't want to be on the road constantly. I knew Woody Herman very well and Frankie

Berry, music director of his band, and he told me to be cautious about [big bands]. I met Basie, but I couldn't get close to Duke Ellington, he was always surrounded by an entourage. But I had one-on-one conversations with Woody, and he passed on some pretty good information about big bands. I watched a video of Duke Ellington and learned so much from it.

So the big band experience is really great. But it's scary. I think of all the things involved in running a big band, like paying everybody! [*laughs uproariously*] That's why we're able to do these festivals in Europe, because they have money allocated for the arts, which is great. [*wiping his brow in relief*] Whew!

Johnson: *Are you on the road constantly?*
Tyner: So, me … people like B.B. King and Ray Charles go out on the road for 10 … I can't do that. I have to come home some time to sleep in my own bed for a while. Then go back out again.
Brecker: It's less than it used to be for me. I have two small children [Jessica, 6, and Sam, 2], so I try to spend as much time with them as I can. It's less than half the year [that I'm out on the road]. Like McCoy, I like to go in and out. After about three weeks out, I want to come home. Five weeks is about the most I can take, and that's rare now. I like to sleep in my bed, too. I'm trying to find a balance, but it's difficult to plan.

Johnson: *What is the status of the Brecker Brothers?*
Brecker: We've been working pretty consistently for the last three years. We decided to make a record three years ago after not having worked together for a long time, and we liked it so much that we did another album and did a lot of touring behind it.

We're going to take a break now and do some solo projects, some other things, and get together again in a couple of years and perhaps do an acoustic group.

Johnson: *Do you still do a lot of sideman work?*
Brecker: Not as much as I used to; I'm cutting back.

Johnson: *Does it require a different perspective to come in as a sideman than come in as a leader?*
Brecker: Yeah. If anything, it's a little easier. [*both laugh*] There's a lot less responsibility. I just think about the music and showing up on time. There's nothing about payroll and things like that.

Johnson: *I'm sure y'all have listened to each other's work for a long time now. What changes have you noticed?*
Tyner: Um, that's a tough question. [*both laugh*] I think it would be better to ask each individual about their own playing.
Brecker: Yeah, you start. [*both laugh again*]
Tyner: Well ... I've done some solo-piano gigs, and that's really interesting. I'm really enjoying that. I was affected by Oscar Peterson in that regard. I think that every pianist should do that for a while. I feel that I've grown a lot doing that.

Really, though, I'm less interested in analyzing how I'm playing today versus how I used to play. I think it's enough to say that I'm very happy with what I'm doing, big band, trio or solo. I see some maturity over the years, and part of being mature is being happy with yourself regardless of what anybody or the critics say. Being happy with yourself is the most important thing.
Brecker: I have to echo McCoy. If anything, what has changed is how I view my playing. I have less of a tendency to judge it; and that's something I never thought would happen. I used to be very hard on myself. Maybe it comes with maturity, but I'm grateful for those moments of nonjudgmental attitudes toward my playing. I find that I'm enjoying myself a lot more. **DB**

September 6, 1979

At the Berkeley Jazz Festival, from left, Jaco Pastorius, Tony Williams, Mitchell and Herbie Hancock.

JONI MITCHELL MAKES MINGUS

by LEONARD FEATHER

The career of vocalist and songwriter Joni Mitchell has, within the last year, developed to emphasize her associations with jazz music, which have been evident at least since Tom Scott's L.A. Express joined her on *Court And Spark*. *Mingus*, her acclaimed collaboration with the late bassist/composer, and her Playboy Jazz Festival performance with Herbie Hancock, Don Alias, Gene Perla and Randy Brecker are indicative of her latest direction.

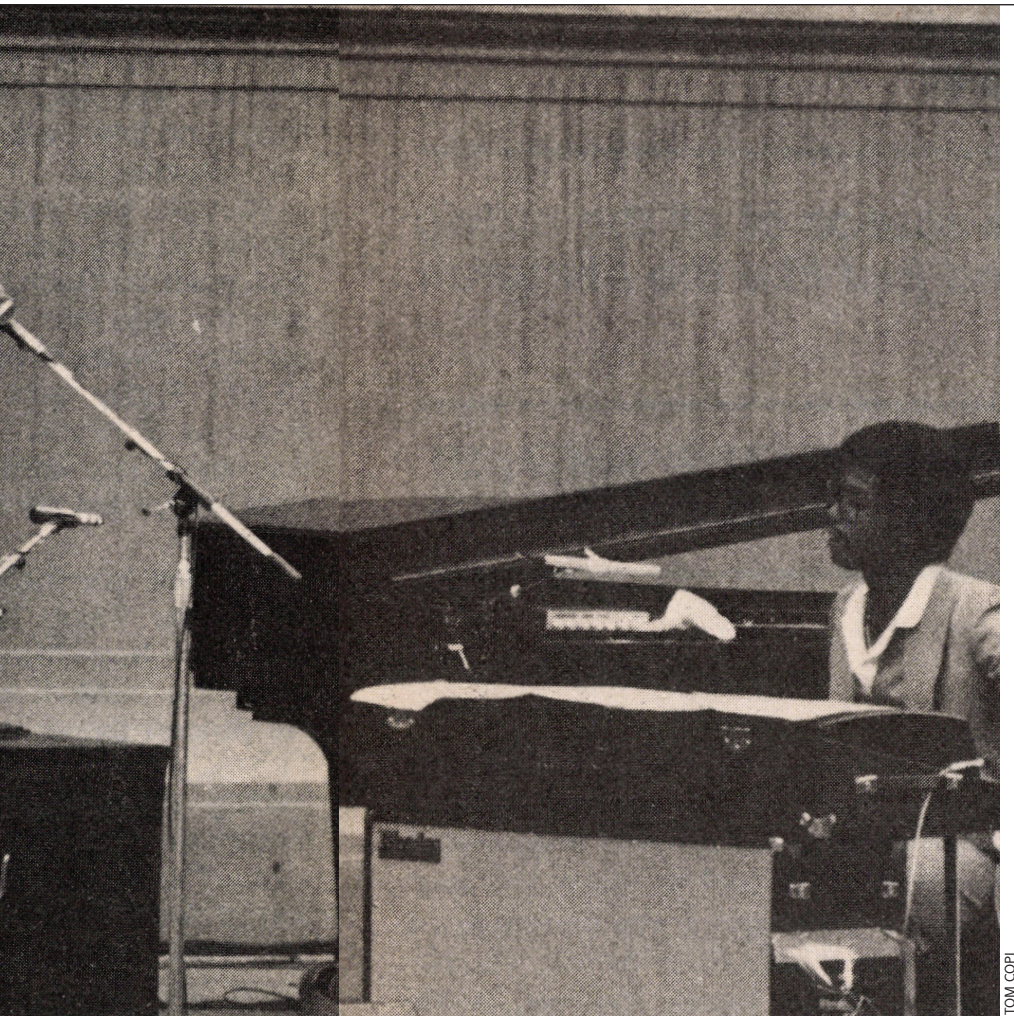
In conversation, Joni states her longtime involvement with jazz — the sound of Annie Ross is clearly discernible in some of Joni's phrasing, and sure enough — Lambert, Hendricks & Ross was an early favorite.

Born in McLeod, Alberta, Canada, Joni Mitchell enrolled at an art school in Alberta but soon drifted into folk singing. She took an increasing interest in songwriting, graduated from ukelele to acoustic guitar, and after working at coffee houses in Toronto, moved to Detroit in 1966.

Her career moved into top gear after she signed with Reprise Records in 1967. During the years that followed, her own personal success as a singer was at times partially subjugated to the impact of others' versions of her songs ("Both Sides Now" provided a hit for Joni and a gold record for Judy Collins). Since 1972 Mitchell has been with Asylum Records.

A natural musician rather than a schooled one, over the years her close association with sophisticated musicians has led to an ever more sensitive awareness of the fundamentals of jazz.

Last year, it became known that she



TOM COPI

SING.....

was embarking on an album in collaboration with the ailing Mingus, the sidemen including Wayne Shorter, Jaco Pastorius, Peter Erskine and Herbie Hancock. By late April, the project had been finally mixed and the album was previewed at a private party. The interview below took place a few days later, when Mitchell still had not decided on a final title, which she discusses here.

The art work consists of three paintings by Mitchell of Mingus. It was to this that I made reference in my opening comment.

Feather: *I like what you put outside the album almost as much as what you put in ... it's a beautiful cover.*

Mitchell: Thank you. I like the cover myself. I've always done much more commercial covers — by that, I mean to distinguish it from my very personal, private painting. It's the first time I decided to put that out because it seemed to suit the music.

The music is very painterly as well, I think, a lot of white canvas, and very brash, strokey interaction, especially on the things that were done with Wayne and Jaco, and Peter and Herbie.

Feather: *Had you ever considered making that your career?*
Mitchell: All my life I've painted. All through school it was my intention to go on to study art. It was a very academic culture that I came out of. Our parents had come up through the Depression, and insisted that we all have a very good education. I wasn't academically oriented and I was growing up just at the time before arts were included as a part of education. Four years later there were fully developed art departments and music departments in the high schools that I attended. But at that time I was kind of a freak.

Feather: *Music education was very limited then, too.*
Mitchell: Well, now, even though they've included that in the program, both the art and the music education are still limited. But they have access to a lot of fantastic equipment, and at least it is included in the curriculum.

At that point in my education, when they discovered on an aptitude test that I had musical abilities, they wanted me to join a glee club, which was pretty corny music; it wasn't too challenging. So I didn't join.

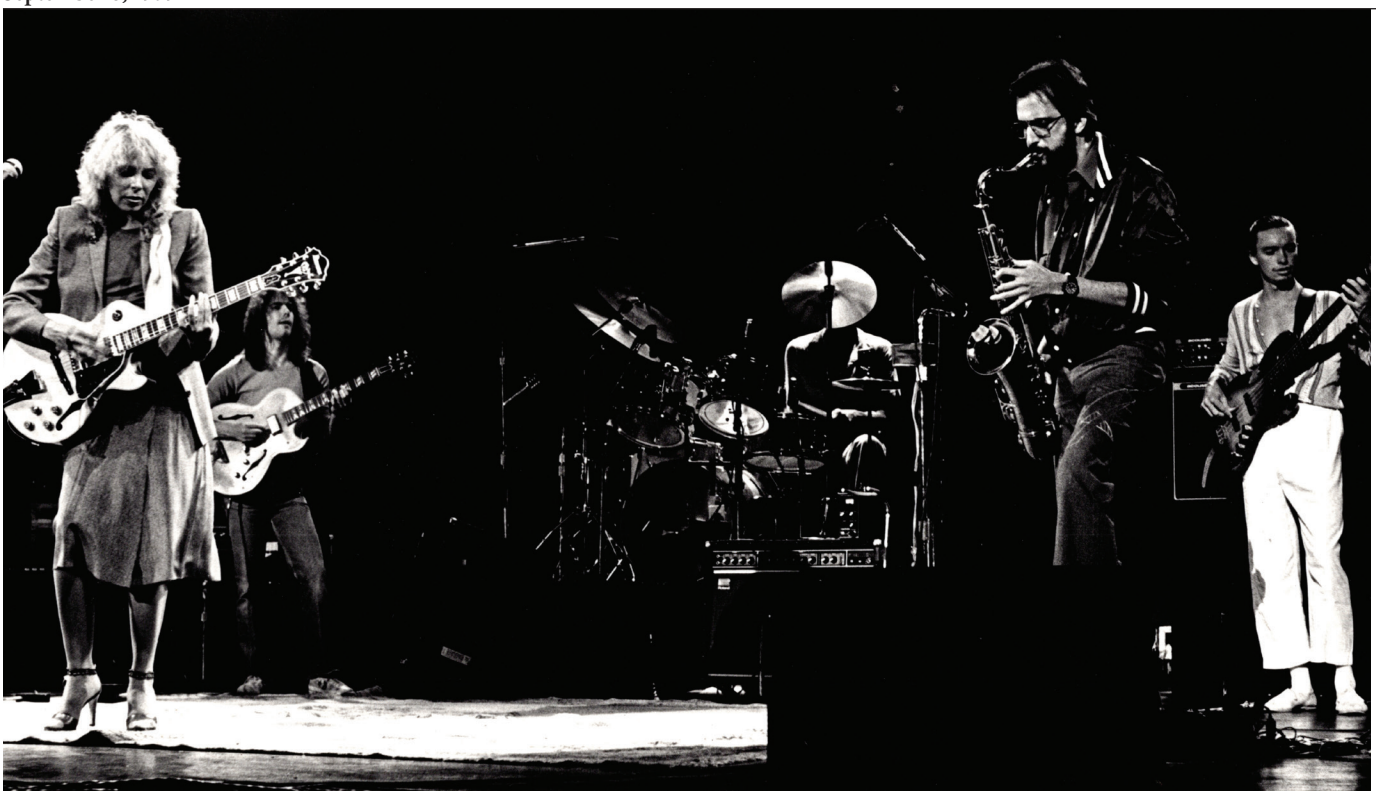
Feather: *Well, you couldn't learn the kind of music you later became involved with.*
Mitchell: No. It was all exposure to people who moved me, that's how it came. It came really from the street, going into a club and hearing somebody hanging out with somebody. Not so much playing with people like jazz musicians, but just observing.

Feather: *What was the first exposure you had?*
Mitchell: When I was in high school — like I say, I wasn't too swift academically, but I did a lot of extracurricular drawing. I did backdrops for school plays, drawings of mathematicians for my math teacher and biology charts of life for my biology teacher. That was a way of appeasing them for being so disinterested in the academic aspect.

One year I did a Christmas card for a fellow who was a school leader, and he gave me a present of some Miles Davis albums. And about that time my only musical interest, actively, was in rock 'n' roll — Chuck Berry, and this was at the level of dance. I loved to dance. I think my time developed from that love. Going to two, three or as many dances as were available to go to a week.

Anyway, by my doing this card, he introduced me to some jazz. Then I heard, at a party, Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, *The Hottest New Sound In Jazz*, which at that time was out of issue up in that part of the country, in Canada. So I literally saved up and bought it at a bootleg price, and in a way I've always considered that album to be my Beatles, because I learned every song off it.

"Cloudburst" I couldn't sing, because of some of the very fast scatting on it; but I still to this day know every song on that album. I don't think there's another album that I know every song on, including my



DARRYL PITT

"When I fell into a circle of rock 'n' roll musicians and began to look for a band, they told me I'd better get jazz musicians to play with me," Mitchell said.

own! I loved that album, the spirit of it. And like I say, it came at a time when rock 'n' roll was winding down, just before the Beatles came along and revitalized it. And during that ebb, that's when folk music came into its full power.

Feather: *What were the Miles Davis albums?*
Mitchell: *Sketches Of Spain* … l must admit that it was much later that Miles really grabbed my attention … and *Nefertiti* and *In A Silent Way* became my all-time favorite records in just any field of music. They were my private music; that was what I loved to put on and listen to — for many years now. Somehow or other I kept that quite separate from my own music. I never thought of making that kind of music. I only thought of it as something sacred and unattainable. So this year was very exciting to play with the players that I did.

Feather: *You did let your hair down one time when you did "Twisted."*
Mitchell: Right — and "Centerpiece," I also did that. One by one I've been unearthing the songs from that Lambert, Hendricks & Ross album.

Feather: *But there's no seeming relationship between the two worlds …*
Mitchell: Which two worlds are you referring to?

Feather: *The world of music you recorded and the jazz world.*
Mitchell: All the time that I've been a musician, I've always been a bit of an oddball. When I was considered a folk musician, people would always tell me that I was playing the wrong chords, traditionally speaking. When I fell into a circle of rock 'n' roll musicians and began to look for a band, they told me I'd better get jazz musicians to play with me, because my rhythmic sense and my harmonic sense were more expansive.

The voicings were broader; the songs were deceptively simple. And when a drummer wouldn't notice where the feel changed, or where the accent on the beat would change, and they would just march through it in the rock 'n' roll tradition, I would be very disappointed and say, "Didn't you notice there was a pressure point here?" or "Here we change," and they just would tell me, "Joni, you better start playing with jazz musicians."

Then, when I began to play with studio jazz musicians, whose hearts were in jazz but who could play anything, they began to tell me that I wasn't playing the root of the chord. So all the way along, no matter who I played with, I seemed to be a bit of an oddball. I feel more natural in the company that I'm keeping now, because we talk more metaphorically about music. There's less talk and more play.

Feather: *You've been associating with jazz studio musicians for how long?*
Mitchell: Four years. I made *Court & Spark* five albums ago.

Feather: *Did that come about by design or by accident?*
Mitchell: The songs were written and I was still looking for a band intact, rather than having to piece a band together myself. Prior to that album, I had done a few things with Tom Scott, mostly doubling of existing guitar lines. I wanted it to be a repetition or gilding of existing notes within my structure. So through him, I was introduced to that band. I went down to hear them at the Baked Potato in Studio City and that's how all that came about.

They all found it extremely difficult at first, hearing the music just played and sung by one person; it sounded very frail and delicate, and there were some very eggshelly early sessions where they were afraid they would squash it, whereas I had all the confidence in the world that if they played strongly, I would play more strongly.

Feather: *So from that point on you worked with the L.A. Express?*

Mitchell: We worked together for a couple of years, in the studio and on the road.

Feather: *Did that expand your knowledge, being around them so much?*
Mitchell: Not really, not in an academic sense. It gave me the opportunity to play with a band and to discover what that was like. But I still was illiterate in that I not only couldn't read, but I didn't know — and don't to this day — what key I'm playing in, or the names of my chords. I don't know the numbers, letters or the staff. I approach it very paintingly, metaphorically: So I rely on someone that I'm playing with, or the players themselves, to sketch out the chart of the changes. I would prefer that we all just jumped on it and really listened.

Miles always gave very little direction, as I understand. It was just "Play it. If you don't know the chord there, don't play there," and that system served him well. It was a natural editing system. It created a lot of space and a lot of tension, because everybody had to be incredibly alert and trust their ears. And I think that's maybe why I loved that music as much as I did, because it seemed very alert and very sensual and very unwritten.

Feather: *And you, in turn, trusted your own ears.*
Mitchell: I do trust my own ears. Even for things that seem too outside. For instance, sometimes I'm told that So-and-So in the band, if I hadn't already noticed, was playing outside the chord. I see that there's a harmonic dissonance created; but I also think that the line that he's created, the arc of it, bears some relationship to something else that's being played, therefore it's valid. So in my ignorance there's definitely a kind of bliss. I don't have to be concerned with some knowledge that irritates other people.

Feather: *"Outside" is only a comparative term, anyway.*
Mitchell: Outside the harmony … but still, as a painter, if the actual contour of the phrase is, like I say, related to an existing contour that someone is playing, then it has validity. Like, if you look at a painting, there seem to be some brush strokes that seem to be veering off, or the color may be clashing, but something in the shape or form of it relates to something that exists; therefore it's beautiful.

I see music very graphically in my head — in my own graph, not in the existing systemized graph — and I, in a way, analyze it or interpret it, or evaluate it in terms of a visual abstraction inside my mind's eye.

Feather: *Where did you first hear about Mingus?*
Mitchell: I remember some years ago, John Guerin played "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" for me, which is one of the songs that I've done on this new album; and it was that same version. But it was premature; he played it for me at a time when it kind of went in one ear and out the other. I probably said "hmm-hmm," and it wasn't until I began to learn the piece that I really saw the beauty of it.

Mingus, of course, was a legend. Folk and jazz in the cellars of New York were overlapping, so I'd heard of Mingus by name for some time. As a matter of fact, I'd heard that name as far back as when I was listening to Lambert, Hendricks & Ross in Canada. I was in high school then, but my friends in the university spoke of these legendary people. That was in the early '60s.

Feather: *When did you actually get to meet him?*
Mitchell: I got word through a friend of a

friend that Charles had something in mind for me to do, and this came down the grapevine to me. Apparently he had tried through normal channels to get hold of me; but there's a very strong filtering system here and for one reason or another it never reached me. So it came in this circular way, and I called him up to see what it was about, and at that time he had an idea to make a piece of music based on T.S. Eliot's *Quartet* and he wanted to do it with — this is how he described it — a full orchestra playing one kind of music, and overlaid on that would be bass and guitar playing another kind of music; over that there was to be a reader reading excerpts from *Quartet* in a very formal literary voice; and interspersed with that he wanted me to distill T.S. Eliot down into street language, and sing it mixed in with the reader.

It was an interesting idea; I like textures. I think of music in a textural collage way myself, so it fascinated me. I bought the book that contained the *Quartet* and read it; and I felt it was like turning a symphony into a tune. I could see the essence of what he was saying, but his expansion was like expanding a theme in the classical symphonic sense, and I just felt I couldn't do it. So I called Charles back and told him I couldn't do it; it seemed kind of like a sacrilege. So some time went by and I got another call from him saying that he'd written six songs for me and he wanted me to sing them and write the words for them. That was April of last year, and I went out to visit him and I liked him immediately; and he was devilishly challenging.

He played me one piece of music — an older piece, I don't know the title of it because we figured it was gojng to take eight songs to make an album: the six new ones and two old ones. So we began searching through this material, and he said, "This one has five different melodies," and I said, "And you want me to write five different sets of lyrics at once," and he said, "Yes." He put it on and it was the fastest, boogieingest thing I'd ever heard, and it was impossible. So this was like a joke on me. He was testing and teasing me; but it was in good fun. I enjoyed the time I spent with him very much.

> 'I LIKED HIM IMMEDIATELY; AND HE WAS DEVILISHLY CHALLENGING.'
> —*Mitchell on Mingus*

Feather: *How sick was he then?*
Mitchell: He was in a wheelchair. I never knew him when he was well, and I never heard him play; he was paralyzed then.

Feather: *How much contact did you have, actually working together?*
Mitchell: There were several visits to the house; the better part of an afternoon listening to old music; discussing the themes and his lyrical intent on the new melodies. Then he and Sue [Mingus] went to Mexico, to a faith healer down there, and during the time they were in Mexico I went and spent 10 days with them. By that time his speech had severely deteriorated. Every night he would say to me, "I want to talk to you about the music," and every day it would be too difficult. It was hard for him to speak. So some of what he had to tell me remained a mystery. But Sue gave me a lot of tapes of interviews with him and they were thrilling to me, because so much of what he felt and described was so kindred to my own feelings; he articulated lessons that were laid on him by people like Fats Navarro and others. So he was definitely a teacher of mine.

Feather: *What in your work had attracted him to you and caused him to get in touch with you?*
Mitchell: Somebody played him some of my records. Now, this is a story that came to me — there's a piece of music of mine called "Paprika Plains" which was done in sections. The middle of it is about seven minutes of improvisational playing, which I had somebody else orchestrate for me. And then stuck on to each end of it is a song that I wrote later around it. It was improvised off of a theme; then I abandoned the theme and just left the improvisational part which I cut together. It's a modern technological way of composing.

It was recorded in January, and the piano was tuned many, many times, so by August when I played the verses, which were born much later, the piano had slightly changed. So when it was orchestrated, it's in tune for a while, but then it hits that splice where it goes from the January piano to the August piano.

With a fine ear you can notice this. So somebody was playing this piece for Charles, and Charles is a stickler for true pitch and time, and he kept saying, "It's out of tune, it's out of tune." But when the piece was over he said that I had a lot of balls!

So something about it — whatever it was he didn't like, he also saw some strength and certainly an adventuresome spirit, because I'd been pushing the limits of what constitutes a song for years; I keep trying to expand it with an instrumental in the middle or with no known or prescribed length, but just as long as my own interest will hold out. And I presume that if it will hold my interest that long that it will at least hold the interest of a minority.

So, as near as I can tell, that was part of it, that he felt that I had a sense of adventure.

DB

DARRYL PITT

“Near as I can tell … he felt I had a sense of adventure,” said Mitchell on why Mingus wanted to work with her.

Jazz REBELS

Lester Bowie & Greg Osby

"You've got to have several irons in the fire," Lester Bowie told Greg Osby years ago, "and my irons are my different bands." The trumpeter with the all-star sextet the Leaders and with the Art Ensemble of Chicago — touring this year with bluesmen or chamber orchestra added — also leads the funky Brass Fantasy (still playing Michael Jackson covers) and Organ Ensemble, and last year recorded six tracks with pop star David Bowie ("A nice cat, straightahead, and professional"). Lester's life is good; we met at his big, airy home in Brooklyn's Clinton Hill, where he's lived 14 years. During our session, Bowie smoked a fine Cuban cigar Bill Cosby gave him — these days he's also cultivating a Cosbyesque mumble — and freely needled a certain trumpet-playing nemesis.

Like Bowie, alto and soprano saxophonist Greg Osby came up in St. Louis, but his manner is more subdued; he chooses his words more carefully. He too has his many irons, however, at a time when conservatives want to drum free-thinkers like him and Lester out of jazz. Osby and buddy Steve Coleman have started two record labels, Rebel-X and Funk Mob. Two recent Osby albums suggest his range: *3-D Lifestyles* (see Reviews, July '93), a jazz musician's rap record hip enough for hip-hoppers, and *Strata Institute's Transmigration* (DIW/Columbia), where Greg, Coleman and Von Freeman jam on Henry Mancini and James Moody tunes (Reviews, May '93). A personification of '80s jazz's Brooklyn rebels, Osby now lives outside Philadelphia.

The musicians set the direction of their conversation with little interference from me. Some opinions expressed will raise controversy. For example, other musicians hold similar views about Wynton Marsalis' stewardship of Jazz at Lincoln Center, and the frosty ways Young Lions deal with more liberal musicians; they just don't discuss them on the record. Self-sufficiency frees Bowie and Osby to say what they please. They have nothing to lose.

GREG OSBY: I got the call to play with Lester Bowie's big band when I first came to town [in 1983]. Lester is one of the cats that inspired me to pursue an individual voice in the music. I was playing with Jon Faddis at the time, and the whole direction of that was what [Hamiet] Bluiett calls "Model-T Music." Playing with Lester's group — and close inspection of his history — showed me that his approach was more appealing than continuing to regurgitate everybody else's ideas.

When me and Steve Coleman started M-BASE, it was a bunch of people getting together and talking, but we didn't have anything established. Lester would say, "So what is that? What chy'all gonna do for yourselves?" [*weakly*] "We'll try … We're gonna do …" He said, "I got all this stuff set up, I can play with this band, that band, Brass Fantasy, the Leaders." That struck a chord: You could create a work base, diversify your skills, using the same core of people — an umbrella structure, like the AACM combined with George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic. As opposed to working with the same group all the time, putting out the same kind of records. That's the most boring pursuit I could ever imagine. Because not only are you uninspired, but your audience can anticipate what your stuff is gonna sound like.

LESTER BOWIE: When you're not really into the music, you get bored, and you transmit that boredom quick. It comes out your horn. Cats who confine themselves to one area, they're limiting themselves. They think they're playing, and they ain't playing.

OSBY: They stunt their growth. I grew so fast when I had a chance to sub with the World Saxophone Quartet, and play with Craig Harris,

By Kevin Whitehead

JUDI SCHILLER

ROBERT NIES

Bowie: "Love to see Jazz at Lincoln Center — it should have been there years ago. ... [But] we're not gonna sacrifice the music to get into the concert hall."

Julius Hemphill, David Murray's big band and octet. That was a lot more challenging than playing some show tunes.

BOWIE: Jazz is so difficult. A lot of people think once they've learned these licks they can get up and play them for the rest of their life. But that's not being truthful to the music 'cause it's not developing. Cats you hear that don't make no mistakes? They ain't trying to do nothing. Everything they hear is on the mark, but they've played it so many times.

OSBY: The beauty of it is regrouping from a mistake. Some of the baddest stuff that's been thought was accidental.

BOWIE: That's right. So I've built a whole career out of making mistakes!

KEVIN WHITEHEAD: *Greg, isn't it arrogant to project your own style before proving you've mastered the styles of past giants?*

OSBY: See, that's where the confusion is. Because these people that we hold in so much esteem were inventors in their own time. Charlie Parker didn't make his mark by continuing to sound like Lester Young. Without your own sound, you couldn't even hang out!

BOWIE: That used to be a thing. You could be good, but even local cats wouldn't regard you as hip unless you had your own personal phrasing and sound. That was a prerequisite. Now they try to turn it inside out, make the least developed the most developed. You do have to go through the music of the past, to learn how to play; but once you do that, that's it. Because jazz is not some academic exercise.

When Wynton got out there, I couldn't believe it. He's supposed to be the DownBeat, hip, jazz, Leonard Feather-type motherf**ker. Here's this cat, obviously, obviously — everybody knows this cat ain't got it. But they keep on pressing: [*scholarly voice*] "He's got the technique, and any day he's gonna come up with this astounding new development. …" Believe me, it ain't gonna happen. How long did it take Lee Morgan to play something of his own, or Clifford [Brown], or Booker Little? Wynton's a good musician, but he's been totally miscast. No way in the world is he the King of Jazz, the King of Trumpet.

WHITEHEAD: *Are you saying he doesn't have a great and moving command of what Rex Stewart and Cootie Williams were doing?*

BOWIE: He's not that kind of a cat, that's what I'm saying. You can't feel an emotional attachment because he's not playing him. But he can be the King of the Classical Trumpet Players, because of his knowledge of jazz and harmony, because [*laughing*] there's no way that he can express hisself. He could completely revolutionize classical trumpet without a doubt. Get classical musicians to improvise, the way they used to. Then he'd be somebody I could respect.

WHITEHEAD: *Wynton has a big job at Lincoln Center, they give him $20,000 commissions, he writes these long suites that are glowingly reviewed in the national press. How can you say he doesn't have it?*

BOWIE: He's got the money. But I feel sorry for him.

OSBY: This isn't a tirade against him or the institution he represents or anything like that. These are just observations. When things are misappropriated, I have to address it myself. He's a good brother, he's cool and everything; but his dogma, his rantings, some of those things are unforgivable.

BOWIE: Why is it that these sorts of

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JEFFREY SCALES

Osby: "These people that we hold in so much esteem were inventors in their own time. Charlie Parker didn't make his mark by continuing to sound like Lester Young."

responsibilities are pressed on a negative person? He even accused Miles [Davis] of treason. Because Miles played a Cyndi Lauper tune ["Time After Time"]? In the '50s, "Surrey With The Fringe On Top" was on the Hit Parade. That's part of the thing, to be contemporary, to express yourself. Wynton's trying to tamper with the music's development, and I see some kind of evil overlay on that.

OSBY: Unwittingly, people like that become a pawn, they become an agent for those who would like to suppress creative intent.

WHITEHEAD: *Greg, Jon Faddis and Red Rodney already did the rap thing. So why are you jumping on the bandwagon now?*

OSBY: No, they haven't done the rap thing. I lived in Brooklyn for most of 10 years, I've collaborated with a lot of the rap artists. You can't just jump on that bandwagon and expect to [*laughs at the prospect*] enhance that sensibility. This is a project that I've wanted to do for some time. It's only currently that I've gotten the support and financial backing. I met a lot of resistance, up until I delivered something tangible.

BOWIE: That's what I like about what Greg is doing — he's into the vibe, the rhythms of what's going on out here now. Playing "Bye Bye Blackbird" or sounding like Duke Ellington, that's got nothing to do with where we're coming from. That's the foundation, we got to do the rest of the house. With jazz, it's not so much what you play as how you play it. It's not something you put into the repertoire, it's a living, breathing, young, baby music.

WHITEHEAD: *[mock-exasperated] "Jazz is America's classical music." We have to put it into the concert hall to get respect.*

BOWIE: I agree with you. Love to see Jazz at Lincoln Center — it should have been there years ago. Every city should have a jazz orchestra with a budget equal to the philharmonic's. But don't negate the other things that are happening, don't stunt the growth of the music. We're not gonna sacrifice the music to get into the concert hall.

OSBY: These people have to expand their tolerance of other branches in the tree. These are all facets coming from the same root source. I consider what I'm doing, what Lester's been doing, to be truer to jazz's historical motive than playing works reminiscent of other times, another climate.

BOWIE: I think Americans are ready for some jazz now, seriously. They're so bored, they haven't heard the music in so long. On tour with the Leaders, the first 30 minutes of every concert would be totally improvised, really advanced, and it was accepted well: "Good! Yeah! It's here! At last! Something different!" So [cultural institutions] should fund our composers, too: Anthony Braxton, Muhal [Richard Abrams], Roscoe [Mitchell], those AACM cats were writing some advanced things years ago.

OSBY: Seriously, seriously.

BOWIE: It's not a simple music anymore. So it does belong in the concert hall. But it also belongs in the street, on the farm, it needs equal access everywhere, the same as country & western, rap, anything. Because jazz is all of these. Cat's sitting back scared, "I won't play in that rhythm, I don't play country & western. That ain't jazz." I say, later for them. Jazz is hip-hop, dixieland, anything the people playing it want it to be. "Man, don't listen to that Argentinean shit, it might influence you." C'mon, baby! Influence me! If it wasn't for Greg and [Organ Ensemble saxophonist] James Carter, I'd damn near have given up hope. I thought all the young cats were turning posers and shit. Developing this music is not about how much technique you have. No one has given Don Cherry his creative due. He's not a great trumpet technician, but he is one hell of a musician. He loosened all of us up, set us free.

Americans often look for the easy way out, and they get misinformation. These young guys don't know any better. They've just been to school, and they don't really have an idea what it's like out here yet. It's not just learning some songs; we have to learn how to live and exchange information as people. "Man, how do you do this? I need some help with this, give me some advice." So we can survive in the industry. I got about 30 musicians in my employ. Nobody's getting rich, but everybody makes damn near enough to pay their rent for that year. And I tell them this has got to be just one of their projects, so everybody in the band's got three or four bands.

We keep working, and we look out for each other.

OSBY: I've talked to Lester only two or three times about the business of music and the business of self-promotion, but those were some of the key conversations of my career, that catapulted me to the next level. A lot of the older cats were reluctant to share any insight with me at all. I guess they figured, "He just rolled into town and is touring the world with Jon Faddis. You haven't paid your dues," whatever dues are. A due is whatever you do. Do what you wanna do.

BOWIE: Dues is just life: love, tragedy, happiness. It's not about how long you've lived, it's

about the emotional attachment.

OSBY: It's sad when somebody who classifies themselves as a creative artist doesn't allow everyday occurrences and new alliances to influence their music. There's a lot of people who experience a lot of things — tragedy, triumph, all this kind of stuff that their documented works don't reflect.

BOWIE: We got to get the music back to when musicians had a ball playing music, hanging out, and talking. Now we got cats looking funny at each other. When I was coming up, I got to hang out with some great cats who treated me like a brother: Blue Mitchell, Lou Donaldson, Tommy Turrentine, Kenny Dorham, Marcus Belgrave, Johnny Coles. They weren't looking at me funny, they were telling me the truth. Cats who act halfway funny ain't nearly on that level.

OSBY: When I came to town, I was going out to the clubs, trying to find out who the cats were who were dealing, my supposed peer group. And I got a lot of resistance. I'd come up to cats I knew from Berklee or Howard on the gig: "Hey, that's some nice stuff you're doing man, what's happening?" "Aw man, that's just some stuff I'm trying to hear, y'know?" The brush-off. "Man, I'm kind of busy now." When you talk to young people, you have to tell them that. A lot of people attend these lectures at schools and colleges: "Come to New York, blah-blah," and they build it up into this grandiose …

WHITEHEAD: *I'm gonna bring my horn down to the Vanguard and sit in …*

OSBY: … and get a contract. They're like that!

BOWIE: Realistically, you have to develop your network. That involves a lot of things. It involves going places. Say you go to Paris, go over and make some noise for a while; you come back here, now you got two places to play. Go to a third place, a fourth place, you start developing your audience. Regardless of whether you get a review in DownBeat, they're gonna want to hear what you sound like, year in and year out.

WHITEHEAD: *And if you stop performing up to your standard, the word's gonna get around.*

BOWIE: Yeah, but then people will pay to see what you've deteriorated to!

WHITEHEAD: *Do you feel sympathy for younger musicians who think they have to do things in a certain way, that they don't have many options?*

BOWIE: I feel so sorry for them boys. Some of them are ruining their careers. Like poor [Wallace] Roney. He's a good musician, he can play, but he pretends he's Miles reincarnated or something. He's got to look like him. There was a time I wanted to be like Miles, too that was part of being hip. But you don't keep on doing it for the rest of your life.

WHITEHEAD: *Besides James Carter, are there any young players you're encouraged by?*

BOWIE: [*to microphone, with cupped hands*] Nicholas Payton! I want you to be a man! Don't listen to all that bullshit, just continue to develop yourself! Don't let nobody tell you to stop, or you're great, or you're not that hip. Please!"

WHITEHEAD: *Greg, any younger players you'd single out?*

OSBY: Joshua Redman. He's pretty open-minded, as long as he doesn't let his big contract and all the attention infest his mind. Ravi Coltrane, he just needs to be a little more assertive. Antoine Roney, Wallace's brother.

BOWIE: Plays saxophone? He don't look like Wayne Shorter, does he? **DB**

Sonny's Side Of The Street

SONNY ROLLINS

By John McDonough

RON HEARD

"Is this going to be another negative, punch-Sonny-Rollins-in-the-eye article for Down Beat?" the man asked with weary resignation as he plopped into a den chair. "Well, I agreed to do it. I know how it's going to come out anyway. So go ahead, ask me. I'm ready."

It was a telephone interview. I imagined Sonny Rollins sitting there in his Hudson River Valley country home north of Rhinebeck, New York; sitting there in a nimbus of ennui waiting to be prodded and poked with an assortment of those unpleasant, blunt instruments we journalists call questions.

His wife, Lucille, had answered the phone and handed it to her husband. "This sure is going to be a mighty short interview," she thought as she walked out the door, got into her car and drove off on some mid-morning errands. Maybe she even pitied the poor schnook on the other end of the line a bit. She was surprised —actually "astonished," she admitted later — to return in an hour-and-a-half and find the conversation still pumping along and probing the merits of cowboy actor Ken Maynard, "B" westerns and actress Joan Leslie.

How Sonny Rollins got from DownBeat to Joan Leslie within 90 minutes is the subject of this modest tale at hand. He took the scenic route, by and large, along the little roads of conversation not always traveled in music interviews. The kind that demand a little improvisation. But Rollins knows about that, doesn't he? The talk avoided the long and familiar chronological expressways that wind past more than 40 years of various "sabbaticals," crises, triumphs, and what have you. All that's been well mapped in insightful essays by such career cartographers as Gary Giddins, Francis Davis, Bob Blumenthal (in his booklet accompanying the new seven-CD Prestige set, *The Complete Prestige Recordings*) and Charles Blanca in his book *Sonny Rollins: The Journey Of A Jazzman*.

So, the assumption in this article will be that no reader needs to be instructed on any of this; or on Rollins' immensity and influence as a tenor saxophonist, an influence that may in the aggregate dwarf that of his one-time contemporary, the late John Coltrane.

With all this as given, then, back to DownBeat.

"I find it petty," he groused on. "I find the things it says about great musicians petty. It tries to denigrate people with these John Simon-type reviews. I guess that's what pays off, though. Writers have to write this type of piece to become famous. I know that's the way it goes. I also know you won't print any of this." [Thus insuring that every word would get printed. Rollins is no media amateur.]

In the '20s, I reminded him, H. L. Mencken liked to say of his fellow journalists that it was their duty "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." To which Rollins replied that no jazz musician is ever comfortable.

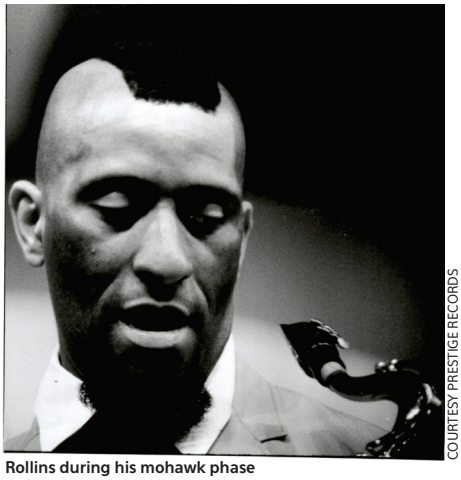
"There are those celebrities who are comfortable," he admitted, "movie stars and rock musicians. But jazz musicians are not movie stars. Knowing what it takes to play jazz, and live the jazz life, I would disagree with any writer who assumed that the jazz musician in this society is comfortable, and thus fair game for attack. I know DownBeat's been pretty hard on me recently; which I suppose is a kind of badge of honor. Maybe now that Miles is dead, they figure they have me to kick around. I'm not saying I'm beyond criticsm. That's not where I'm coming from. I'm my biggest critic. I know when I'm not sounding good before DownBeat or anyone else tells me so. But I object to DownBeat for what I've seen it do to other musicians." He didn't offer a bill of particulars; his wife, whom he met in 1956 and who still hates the word "gig," reads the articles and reviews, only occasionally passing one along to him. But then he said this: "I think that the jazz business is fragile enough. It's a real art and it should be boosted. That's how I feel."

Aha, now it was clear. Of course!

That's exactly how he should feel. He's a jazz musician. Naturally he identifies with the world that has defined him. A more disinterested third person, however, might have looked at the two of us — musician and writer — and seen it another way. How little these writers often know about the reality of the world they cover, he might say; and how little musicians understand that writers have nothing if not their independence. They must resist the temptation to be liked by the famous subjects they hobnob with by becoming "boosters."

Whichever side you might favor in this gentlemen's disagreement, one fact is immutable: Rollins, like all the finest jazz artists, will be remembered by his recordings, not his press clippings or reviews, in this magazine or any other. Through many label associations, he has always taken his recordings very seriously. Differences between labels? "Mainly whether they pay me my royalties," he said. "Some pay, some don't."

Over the decades, he has worked with the most astute jazz producers in the industry: Bob Weinstock, Ira Gitler, Orrin Keepnews, Norman Granz, George Avakian and Bob Thiele. In recent years, his wife has held that function. All have been astute enough to let him produce himself. "The creative decisions on arrangements and material were always mine. That's why I don't think whether the producer was George or Orrin was ever particularly material in terms of the final product. They may disagree, but that's the way I see it."



COURTESY PRESTIGE RECORDS

Rollins during his mohawk phase

'Maybe now that Miles is dead, they figure they have me to kick around. I'm not saying I'm beyond criticism. … I know [if my playing isn't] sounding good before DownBeat or anyone else tells me.'

Even his 1962–'64 period with a major non-jazz label, RCA, presented no pressures to "expand his audience."

"The contract at RCA," he said, "was a big contract at the time and called for a certain amount of product within a certain period. It was stricter in terms of what had to be done — three records a year, maybe. It was very high-profile. Paul Desmond was signed, too. But they took us both on our own terms. They didn't expect me to sell like Elvis Presley, and they didn't pay me like Presley, either. But there was no interference."

Rollins says he rarely gives much thought to his record sales or calculates ways to boost them. To him they are almost a peripheral concern, serving more a publicity than an income function.

"I've been recording for many years and get certain royalties from my compositions and record sales," he explains. "But I couldn't live on that sum. Most of my income comes from live performances. If I break my arm or can't play, I'm out of luck. That's how close to the edge a jazz musician lives."

Happily, Rollins gets princely concert fees, which he deserves and which help keep that "edge" rounded down to something more like a gently sloping hill. Although he won't discuss fees, he reportedly received more than $20,000 for one 50-minute set at the recent Chicago Jazz Festival. Rollins knows his full value and doesn't quibble or give anything away. He would not consider, for instance, permitting National Public Radio to air his Chicago Jazz Festival appearance on the network. Yet, he is one of the relatively few jazz artists today who can maintain an active concert schedule within the United States. Most have to trot the globe to find a steady concert circuit. He plays almost no clubs anymore. And the preferred bookings are the ones where he doesn't have to share the bill, says wife Lucille.

Although the albums he turns out every year-and-a-half or so don't generate great cash windfalls, they keep his profile high in the marketplace.

That, in turn, produces the awareness, the interest and the personal-appearance bookings that generate the real money. In this, he is no different than any other aging music legend. Neither Frank Sinatra nor the Rolling Stones have been able to generate important record sales lately; Sinatra seems to have given up, in fact. Yet, on the road they mint money. On the jazz world's smaller fiscal scale, the same is true of Rollins.

"You have to record to stay famous, to keep your name out there," he says. "Albums are more a publicity thing in a lot of ways."

They're also a record of his musical career. And history — and his place in it — is something he's keenly alert to. Maybe this is why he is said to have such mixed feelings about the whole recording process. If it's not my best, I don't want it preserved, seems to be the standing policy. That way there's no danger of anything slipping out.

When something does, Rollins is not a happy man. A French RCA collection of alternate takes from the '60s, for instance, came out this year on a Bluebird CD. Orrin Keepnews' album notes will provide the details for anyone who wishes to inquire. But they are of little consolation to Rollins.

"I feel it's an invasion of my prerogative to decide how I want to be represented on records," he said. "I used to go ballistic over these things. Now I realize it's done

RANDI HULTIN

Sonny Rollins on "Gardener's Road" in Oslo, Sweden

a lot. All kinds of performances are subject to this sort of thing [including radio broadcasts]. But if I don't like the way I sound, I don't want the world to hear it more than once. It's an issue of privacy almost." It's also something that only the most important musicians experience, artists whose work is considered so vital that even the scraps have value. It's the ultimate honor. "I understand that," he says. "But I'm a musician. Music is my living. I have to control the product I produce."

If Rollins is conscious of history, he still finds it hard to see himself as a historical figure. Most of the leading young players of jazz today never knew a world in which Sonny Rollins was not a star — just as Rollins never knew a world in which Armstrong or Ellington were not stars. In their eyes, Rollins is Ellington. "Yes," he grants, "but it's impossible for me to look at myself as these young people might. I think of myself as I always have. The good thing is that when I play somewhere I don't have to fight for acceptance. The bad part is I have to produce at a standard I set for myself 30 or 40 years ago. You can't go stink up the joint just because you're supposed to be great. But I can't be sucked in by the fact that some people may think I'm an icon. That would be as ridiculous as taking all the bad things writers write seriously. My own assessments are the most important. They're also the harshest; but that's for me to live with."

Still, when Rollins plays "Oleo" or "St. Thomas" and hears that wave of recognition roll across an audience, he feels good about it. "I want to communicate, even though I basically play for myself," he admits. "When I can reach an audience, I feel as if I've persuaded them to come into my camp and accept what I am. You have to be careful not to let that tempt you either to phone in a performance or to become solicitous of the crowd. That's why I stopped playing at one time. The pressure I felt from the audience made me want to do something for them I wasn't able to do."

If an audience doesn't recognize one of Rollins' own pieces, such as "Oleo," they'll certainly recognize familiar melodies like "Tennessee Waltz," which he turned into an aria at this year's Chicago Jazz Festival. No jazz musician, of course, plays such an unexpected repertoire. The hippest in his audiences, who can't resist sneering at Irving Berlin, have always preferred to regard this Rollins trademark as part of some imagined sardonic side to his personality. They think he's kidding. But the joke's on them. He seems almost offended when someone refers to pieces like "There's No Business Like

Show Business" or "I'm An Old Cowhand" as corn. He certainly never condescends to them in performance. These songs are rooted in memories of his childhood, in some cases. Maybe he even remembers Benny Goodman and Gene Krupa's "The Last Roundup," circa 1935. In any case, he can bring a child's excitement and straightforwardness to them.

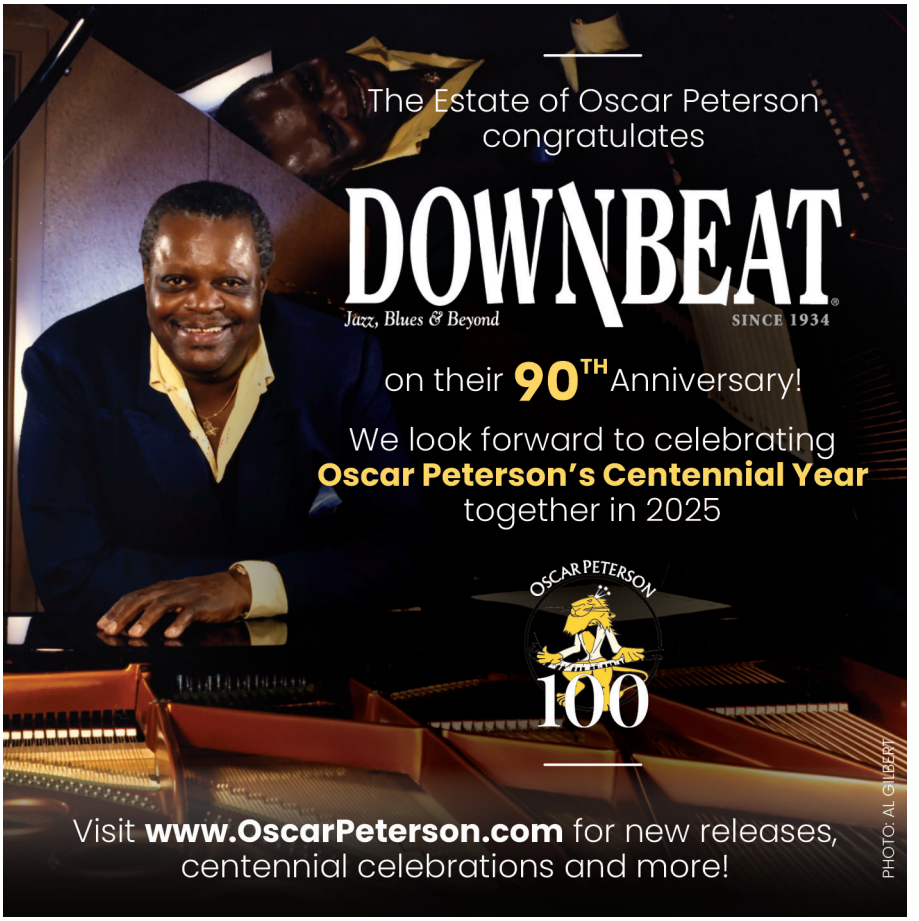
Rollins gives the impression of being a pessimist. Sometimes it's more than an impression. When he speaks of the world's future, it's often with a conditional "if." He seems discouraged by the state of the environment, the government, the media." I'm concerned about the state of the world," he says grimly, "but I'm also too sophisticated to read newspapers or watch TV and think I'm being seriously informed." He recommends Bill McKibbon's recent book, *The Age Of Missing Information*, to friends. It puts everything in perspective, he says. "Things are happening that nobody is seeing. Don't miss it."

So he retreats to the things he trusts most: his home, his family, his friends. And, oh yes, his old movies. There's a wonderfully healthy innocence in this passionate affection he holds for "the stuff that dreams are made of." "They're the best thing on TV," he insists. "They're television's one redeeming virtue." At home he's probably more likely to leaf through a movie book or watch a film than listen to music. His video shelf, like his repertoire, is packed with the greats: John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon*, Marlene Dietrich in Sternberg's *The Blue Angel*, Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca* and WC. Fields' *The Bank Dick*.

"I like those older black-and-white ones particularly," he confesses. "In fact, the ones I really look for are the 'B' pictures, especially westerns. I grew up on guys like Ken Maynard, Hoot Gibson, Buck Jones, Bob Steele and Johnnie Mack Brown.

"There're a few musicals I've been trying to find, too. I'd love to get *The Sky's The Limit*. That's the one in which [Fred] Astaire introduced 'My Shining Hour' and 'One For My Baby' in 1942 — a great Harold Arlen score. Joan Leslie was the young ingenue at the time. She was beautiful."

The interview had been going on about 80 minutes by the time we got to Ken Maynard and Joan Leslie. Lucille Rollins was back from her errands by now, and it seemed we'd covered enough. "Should I have my wife read this when it comes out?" he said. "Or should we just pretend it never happened?" I was noncommittal. But if anyone can get Sonny Rollins a copy of *The Sky's The Limit*, let him know. And when you do, tell him DownBeat asked you to do it. **DB**



August 1980

"If I had heard this, I'd be skeptical, too" Akiyoshi said about the potential for success of a Japanese woman fronting a large ensemble. "But if the music has conviction, the whole problem will be resolved."

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVE/INSET: CHARLES BEHNKE

TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI

by PETER ROTHBART

Toshiko Akiyoshi is an international phenomenon: a Japanese woman writing in an American art form, for an American band that sells best in Japan. While other name jazz bands tour the United States continuously, Akiyoshi takes her band on tour only occasionally, balancing her schedule between tours and the free time she uses to create new works. She and the band she co-leads with her husband, Lew Tabackin, are based in Los Angeles, yet her more profitable markets are in the Midwest and Eastern United States.

Akiyoshi is consistently at or near the top of critics and listeners polls in the United States; she copped top spot in DownBeat's last Readers Poll (Dec. '79) with her band and as arranger, and placed second to the great Charles Mingus in the composer category. In last year's DB Critics Poll, she likewise took two firsts and a second. This year, Akiyoshi-Tabackin is again tops with the world's critics (August 1980). In Japan, their last record, *Farewell*, dedicated to Charles Mingus, received 100 out of a possible 100 points from Swing Journal, that country's top jazz magazine.

That Akiyoshi and her band have been able to survive for the past eight years is testimony to the tenacity which is readily perceived when one meets the petite pianist, and to her unwavering demand for excellence. Because her music is so difficult, demands extra rehearsal time and requires so much doubling in the saxophone section, her musicians are paid high salaries. It's so expensive to take her band on tour that the best profits on the last four out of five tours were made by airline companies.

Nevertheless, the band survives, rehearsing weekly in Los Angeles and doing sound checks when on the road, no matter the logistical difficulties involved. The band has been touring more frequently in the past few years. It plays in Japan every 18 months. It visited Europe for two days for the first time in 1978 and returned for two weeks in 1979 to play the prestigious Berlin Jazz Festival. The band's increasingly busy schedule placed heavy demands on some musicians with other, more local commitments. Long gone are Dick Spenser, Bobby Shew, Gary Foster and Peter Donald. Although the band has replaced six of its members within the past year, Akiyoshi says, "The band in many ways sounds better than ever."

Akiyoshi has no plans to have the band tour for 40 weeks, explaining, "The main reason we formed the band was to play my music, and my main responsibility is to create music. Lew and I decided we'd

like to have a balance between the number of weeks we go out, and leave the rest as free time for myself, to keep creating and do some piano playing, which I've neglected in the past several years. This would also give Lew time to do his pianoless trio."

Akiyoshi's attention to quality and detail has enabled her to create 10 high-quality big band albums, and she's proud of them all. To ensure continued control of record quality without the necessity of making artistic concessions, Akiyoshi and Tabackin have just started a record company, Ascent. *Farewell*, previously released on Japanese RCA, and a Tabackin trio record called *Black And Tan Fantasy* will be Ascent's first discs. The band's relationship with U.S. RCA has been ended, to their mutual satisfaction.

"Lew and I are careful about the programming," says Toshiko. "We want to make sure that future albums don't fall from our past levels. The music requires a certain level of musicianship. That's why we don't use many people right out of college. Some younger musicians say, 'Don't tell me what to do.' But it has nothing to do with ego — we all have to let the music come out."

The concentration required to perform Akiyoshi's music makes the band look almost like a symphony orchestra: There is little unnecessary movement by the musicians.

Akiyoshi's music differs significantly from that of other jazz band composers. Her works often change meter several times. As she explains, "Pulse doesn't mean the same thing as tempo. The pulse should remain the same. This is what should be transmitted to the entire band." Akiyoshi's writing is unpredictable in several aspects. Her accents are often unusually placed, a fact some analysts attribute to her Japanese background. Her forms are often quite extended.

Her voicings retain a vertical character that distinguishes them from, say, Thad Jones, and she explains that in two situations, given the same lead line and underlying chord structure, she is likely to voice the two examples differently. "It all depends on where the line is coming from and where it's going. I like to write this way. To me, this is music."

While many contemporary writers use a more horizontal or linear writing approach to voicing harmonies (voicing the accented or stressed notes vertically, then simply writing melody notes to link the pitches together), Akiyoshi prefers to voice each note vertically, no matter how fast it goes by. This way, "if it is played slowly, there will still be a beautiful line."

Drawing from a wide range of sources for inspiration, Akiyoshi writes "what I allow myself to hear. I try to put it into actual sound, as accurately as possible. When I write, I start from scratch. I forget the last tune, so each becomes different. All music has a point of view. Circumstances may be different but emotions are experienced by all. My music comes from me, so I hope people can identify with it. We are all the same as the person next door. Human nature remains unchanged, and music should deal with this unchanging human nature.

"When I listen, it's personal, but the music has a lasting capacity, which I can identify with as I hope others in the future can, too. Hearing is abstract. I don't like to follow systems when I write."

Following this philosophy, some of Akiyoshi's compositions are conceptualized in their entirety, while some develop as she composes. Like many fusion composers, Akiyoshi's compositions are her arrangements; she makes no distinction between the two processes. Some of Akiyoshi's music is inspired by real life. "After Mr. Teng" reflects her happiness with the United States' diplomatic recognition of mainland China. "Kogun" (which means "one who fights alone") is dedicated to the Japanese soldier found in a Philippine jungle more than 30 years after World War II.

"Kogun" illustrates a commitment beyond music.

"I am a member of society first and a musician second." "Kogun" also represents an important blend of Japanese music with Western instruments. "My father was a student of Noh theater. He was fascinated by it. I'm trying to draw from my heritage and enrich the jazz tradition without changing it. I'm putting into jazz, not just taking out."

Traditional Japanese music is more likely to accompany than tell a story, and relies little on melody, Akiyoshi explains.

"The beat is different. It's more circular, arched, rather than an up- or downbeat." As she conducts her band, this arched beat is frequently reflected in her movements. Yet "Kogun" still swings, which Akiyoshi considers vital to jazz. "Jazz is a certain rhythm. It's how you play, not what you play. It's a street music, with a certain earthiness. Swing is a balance between earthiness and being sophisticated."

"Kogun"'s successful blend of two seemingly disparate styles is due partly to husband Tabackin's flute ability. His solo and cadenza on "Kogun" are packed with minute sounds, from his subtly sophisticated double-tonguing to his earthy shrieks and quarter-tone smears. "Lew has a French model flute (open-holed) that enables him to do this. He listened to a lot of shakuhachi music. His abilities are so incredible, he can sense the music."

As Akiyoshi points out, "Meeting a good partner is important. After all, Ellington had Strayhorn." While Akiyoshi is expanding structural and harmonic limits with her arrangements, Tabackin is creating a new flute tradition. "Lew respects the saxophone tradition, and sees himself as an extension of that tradition. Yet the flute until recently was a classical instrument without a jazz tradition. Amplification now makes jazz flute possible, so Lew is developing a tradition."

Akiyoshi attributes her success in Japan to several factors.

"Competition wasn't as tough as in the United States, so I could rise to the top quicker. The market is so much tighter in this country, and there's so much competition. Most foreign players don't succeed in the U.S. because of the competition. And of course, there was less female competition in Japan. Whenever women competed in a man's world in the United States, they didn't succeed. Those that did became separated from the mainstream and wound up as piano players in the more sophisticated, high-class clubs, such as the East Side Club or the Hickory House in New York. A few, such as Marian McPartland, did succeed."

According to Akiyoshi, part of her success in Japan is due to the practices of recording company executives in that country. Jazz recordings in Japan are marketed much the same way as classical recordings are in the United States. Rather than going for the megabuck superstars who may die musically in a short time, as in the American pop market, Japanese record companies can be satisfied with a smaller return over a longer time. "There's no way to lose money on this band," Akiyoshi explains. "Our monetary outlay in terms of production is moderate, but American companies are not interested in a moderate profit. Jazz musicians are victims of the industry in the U.S. There's no proper exposure or advertising. The Japanese companies are operating more logically, which is better for both of us."

Kendor is publishing many of Akiyoshi's charts and, according to music stores, they are selling well despite the problems inherent in performing Akiyoshi's music on the high school and college levels. The woodwind doublings are extensive. […]

With Akiyoshi on piano, the band consists of Tabackin, Dan Higgins, Bob Shepherd, John Gross and Bill Byrne, saxes and other reeds; Buddy Childers, Steve Huffsteder, Larry Ford and Mike Price, trumpets; Hart Smith, Jim Sawyer, Bruce Fowler, Phil Teele, trombones; Steve Houghton, drums; and Bob Bowman, bass. The technical ability this band brings to Toshiko's music is quite rare on any level. […]

Against all odds, Akiyoshi's band and music have survived for eight years and continue to reach more people. When she and Tabackin formed the band in 1973, there was a tremendous amount of skepticism about a Japanese woman writing for a jazz band in Los Angeles. In her own words, "If I had heard this, I'd be skeptical, too. But if the music has conviction, the whole problem will be resolved." **DB**

November 1993

LISA SEIFERT

MAX ATTACK

BY SUZANNE MCELFRESH

It is no overstatement to call Max Roach one of the most versatile musicians ever. Throughout his 50-year career, this drummer/composer/bandleader has collaborated with the most celebrated bebop artists (Bird, Dizzy, Monk, Miles) and with the foremost players among the avant garde (Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, Henry Threadgill), with symphony orchestras (the Boston Pops and the Atlanta Symphony) and with rappers and DJs (Fab Five Freddy, et al.). He has performed in duets (Gillespie, Braxton, Taylor) and with

a full vocal choir (the Max Roach Chorus featuring the John Motley Singers), with percussion ensembles (his own M'Boom, the Kodo Drummers of Japan) and with writers (Amiri Baraka, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou), as a solo artist and with quintets, quartets and double quartets.

In addition, Max Roach has composed music for each of these artistic situations, as well as for theater productions, dance performances, television and film. He has presented these many talents in nightclubs, in concert halls and in the classroom. He's an educator (at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst), a record producer (for Mesa/Bluemoon), an artistic director (of the Jazz Institute of Harlem at Aaron Davis Hall), the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation fellowship (more commonly called a "genius grant").

At 68, with these many accomplishments behind him, the man could afford to relax. But, as he sits in the music room of his Manhattan apartment, Max Roach talks of future projects — accompanying a silent film; restaging *Juju*, a music/dance/video collaboration; completing his in-progress autobiography. And he also talks of the past — that is, his most illustrious past, a still-very-much-alive past.

Really, though, those future projects and that vibrant past are one and the same, are all part of this esteemed musician's multifaceted and prolific career.

SUZANNE McELFRESH: *What's so striking about your career is the wide range of musics you've been involved with. What has been your motivation for that?*

MAX ROACH: I was discussing the separation of music with some folks today. Someone might say, "Well, I don't understand jazz. I'm a blues man." What does that mean? It's all dealing with the world of sound. When I go and hear something, I don't care what it is as long as the people are serious and really into doing it. If you hear the virtuosos of any kind of music, you have to appreciate it. Rock is really a spectacle that you can appreciate and enjoy. If you see Willie Nelson or Pavarotti, there's no way in the world you could not enjoy it. It's a gift to be able to see someone who's specially endowed and he's in the right place at the right time. If you miss that, you're missing something wonderful.

And actually, the separation of music is the condemning of something from some name. I've never understood what "bebop" really means, or what "jazz" means. Does that really describe the fact that a person is a composer, that a person is a virtuoso instrumentalist, that a person is rare in our time, like Charlie Parker or Art Tatum or Dizzy Gillespie? Does "jazz" really describe who that is? Same thing with "bebop." That word doesn't really describe the genius of the music itself. It doesn't give it the gravity and the weight and the seriousness and the hard work that it takes to be a Dizzy Gillespie or a Charlie Parker.

McELFRESH: *I was listening to* Live At The Beehive *the other day [Roach with Clifford Brown]. On that record, there's a tangible excitement. What did it feel like, to be creating that music at that time, in the '40s and '50s, at 4 a.m. in some club?*

'I've never understood what "bebop" really means, or what "jazz" means.'

ROACH: In those days, there were two unions, the white union and the black union. Across the land in the U.S., it was like that. And I'm telling you this because only certain musicians, such as ourselves, crossed the line. We worked downtown at the so-called legitimate houses, 9 p.m. to 3 a.m., and then we would come uptown — if it was New York; in Chicago it was going to the South Side. When Charlie Parker came to New York, he joined that band we had, with Clark Monroe, which worked downtown and then uptown. We were young and we just played music all the time. The uptown places opened at 4 a.m., and when we would come out of these clubs, it would be daylight, and we would still look for places to go. At noon there were places to play. It seemed like the city never slept. So as youngsters, we just couldn't sleep. There was so much going on.

McELFRESH: *That was really a certain moment in history, with the war going on and the effect that that had on the country.*

ROACH: The big-band demise happened because of a 20 percent tax added to public dancing, comedians, singers — the war tax. So dance halls went down the drain, and small clubs began to exist. It was the first time that people just sat down and listened to the music. All of a sudden the spotlight was on the musicians; so the great virtuoso players were the ones who really worked. As musicians, it gave us an opportunity to develop another kind of music. We knew that we had to play differently. We felt almost obliged to come up with something ourselves. We were all products of the big-band period, where it was order and arrangements. Now, we had four or five people onstage, and you had more freedom. But this wasn't the first time something like this had happened. If you go back to New Orleans and King Oliver and Louis Armstrong, they did the same things with small groups, using counterpoint and other things to make it work. So nothing is really new, you just do it with a different approach.

McELFRESH: *What did you think when you heard Charlie Parker play?*

ROACH: Everything was always on the edge with Bird. You never knew what he was going to do musically, but it always worked out. We never wanted him to stop when he would play. But he would give us just enough, and then he would take his horn out of his mouth. And we would say to each other, "Why'd he stop playing? Were you listening to that?!" But there was a reason for that. When I started working with Brownie [Clifford Brown], he told me an interesting story about working with Bird. He said he got so excited about hearing Charlie play that he started saying, "Blow, Bird! Blow, Bird!" and it became annoying to Bird on the bandstand, so he stopped playing. Then Clifford started playing. And he said Bird put his mouth next to Clifford's ear and said, "Blow, motherf**ker. Blow, motherf**ker. Blow, motherf**ker. Blow, motherf**ker." He said it scared him to death. But Clifford learned a lesson, that it was distracting. Bird just had that effect on you, though.

McELFRESH: *Your first recording date was with Coleman Hawkins, in 1944, when you were 19. What do you remember about that session?*

ROACH: Dizzy Gillespie was the contractor of that date. Recording technology wasn't like it is today. They only had one or two mics. In the studio, the band was placed in one corner, and the drummer was placed in the other corner. And they put a lot of blankets and towels over the bass drum, and they had me put my wallet on the snare drum to muffle it. And I remember I said to Dizzy, "If Coleman Hawkins didn't want a drummer, why'd you bring me into this?" [*laughs*] Because on 52nd Street I was bashing. It was fun, 'cause we had to fill it up, make it sound like it was a big band. But Dizzy told me, "Just shut up and go in the corner and play the drums."

McELFRESH: *What's the story behind "Papajo," the composition of yours that involves only the hi-hat?*

ROACH: It's a composition where you create phrases and try to evoke as many sounds out of that one part of the instrument as possible. However, it's not original to me. When Gene Krupa was on his way to the happy hunting ground, so to speak, the Newport Festival in '71 or '72 gave him a testimonial one hot July

COLLIS H. DAVIS JR.

Roach with dancer Dianne McIntyre performing "New Dance" at Symphony Space, New York, in 1980.

afternoon in Central Park.

And all the drummers from everyplace came to pay tribute to Gene. Buddy Rich, Art Blakey, everybody played and played their hearts out. It must have gone on 10 hours. The man who closed the show was Papa Jo Jones. And he came onstage, after all these drummers had played all this stuff, with just that cymbal. So what you hear me do, really, is my version of what I heard him do that hot July afternoon. He was master of the hi-hat.

McELFRESH: *Are you familiar with Baby Dodds'* Talking And Drum Solos *[Folkways, out of print], where he demonstrates how to play the drums?*

ROACH: Yes, yes. I've got that. If you were interested in the drums, Baby Dodds was one of the people you knew about. He was in New Orleans with Louis Armstrong and King Oliver — so you had to deal with Baby if you even thought about the instrument. On this recording, he explained this four-legged instrument, he demonstrated it. And he also explained the attitude: "Remember, you should play with variety. Don't play the same thing for the pianist as you played for the saxophone player." He would use the sides of the drums and wood blocks and all kinds of different effects. "All these sounds are in that instrument," he would say.

McELFRESH: *Like some of the music you do with M'Boom.*

ROACH: Yes. But you know, that's not a new thing. I remember the first big job I had, I was about 19, and I was called to work the New York Paramount with Duke Ellington, because Sonny Greer wasn't able to do the show, and I could read a show. I'd heard Duke's records, but it was the first time I'd played with him. Well, I got up on that stage and Sonny Greer had a xylophone, tympani, chimes — Duke wrote for all of this stuff — and there wasn't a sheet of music. It was frightening because there were all these instruments up there and no music; and for the stage shows, you had to play specific songs for all these vaudeville acts. But Sonny played everything by ear. So as we were loading up on the bandstand, Duke saw this look on my face, and said, "Just keep one eye on me and one eye on the act out there, and everything will be all right, son." So I made it through. But that, again, attracted me to the pageantry of the theater. At these shows, the stage would rise up to the audience, and as the band hit the audience, the crowd was screaming, and there was the magic of lights and the dancers and all that. That convinced me that this was the life I wanted to be involved in.

At this point in the conversation, Max's twin daughters, Io and Dara, arrive. Having just graduated from Spellman College, they're spending the summer working as production assistants. Dara discusses her work on a Taylor Dayne video, and the term "house music" crops up. Max nods, and comments, "House. Oh, yes."

McELFRESH: *How do you know about house music?*

ROACH: Of course, I know. I've got these two gangstas in here. [*laughs*] They keep me up on things.

McELFRESH: *But then, you've also been involved with various rap projects.*

ROACH: Yes, early on. Before it was a fad. I often have to remind my cohorts, musicians of my generation, that rappers come from the same environment as Louis Armstrong — they came from the Harlems and the Bed-Stuys, the West Side of Chicagos. The rappers

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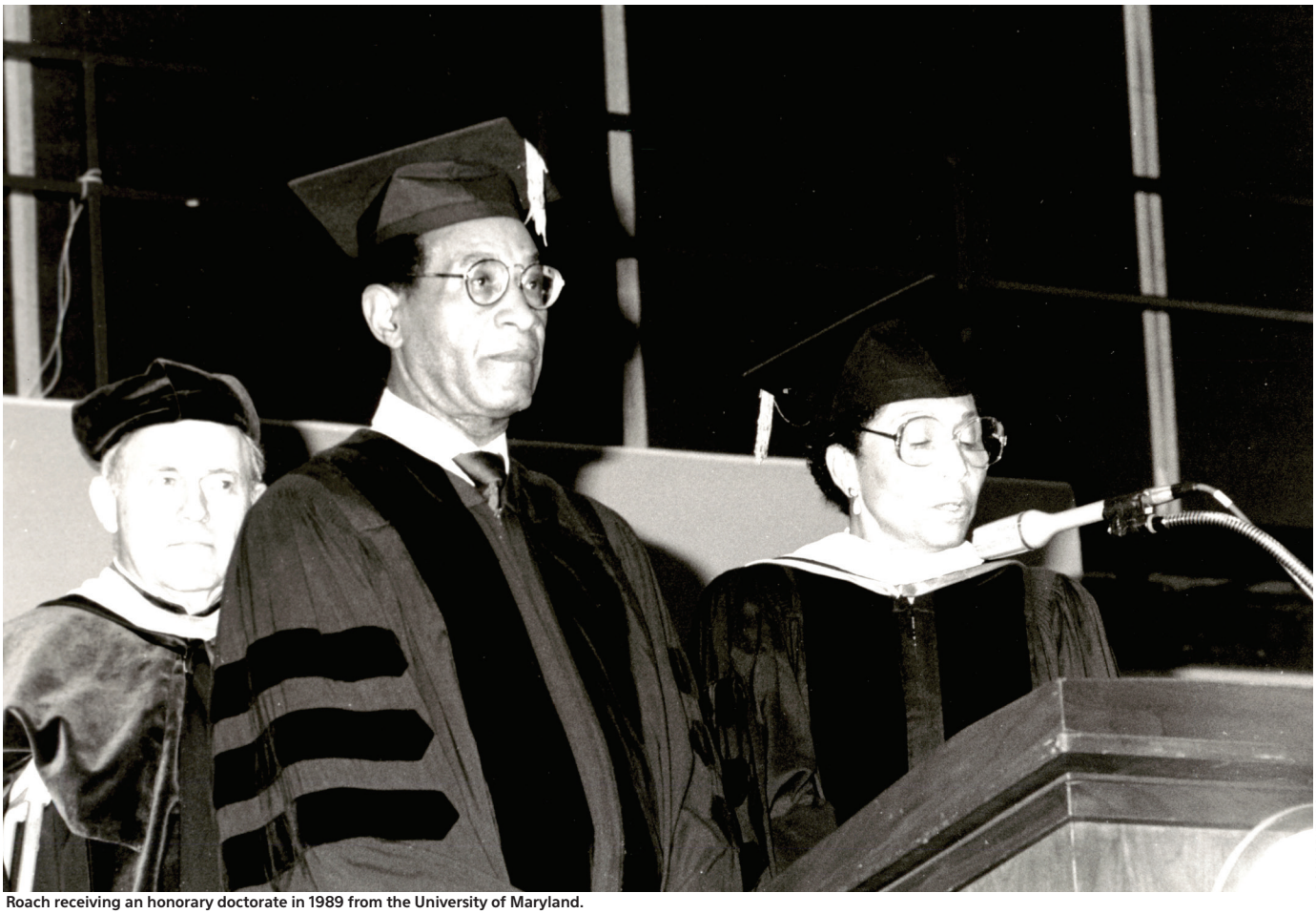

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVE

Roach receiving an honorary doctorate in 1989 from the University of Maryland.

didn't have the advantage, or the disadvantage, of going to the great conservatories or universities so they could deal with literature and "learn how to write poetry." And Louis Armstrong didn't go to a conservatory where he could learn to write music. And if he had, we wouldn't have this great music that the world is listening to now. So thinking about it like that, I have to remind them that these guys are making history, like Coltrane and Pops. They use dance music behind themselves and they talk and they tell stories, and they bring their world right into our communities. Most people have never been in Harlem. But, I mean, that's what you hear. If I'm driving my car down 126th Street, and some kids are playing ball in the street, and I don't wanna blow my horn, so I just kinda cruise by them, some little eight-year-old kid says, "C'mon, motherf**ker! Drive the car!" to me, like that. [*laughs*] You know, you feel like getting out and smacking him. But you know, this is what's going on in our communities. So they're bringing that to us. [*laughs*]

McELFRESH: *Kind of a community-outreach program.*

ROACH: [*laughs*] Absolutely. Absolutely. So I see the similarities sociologically, politically and historically. And so, if you can like Louis Armstrong, you have got to deal with [rappers] on the same level. It's the same thing with country music. I like country, because I grew up in North Carolina. And country came from Leadbelly and Blind Lemon Jefferson] and all these guys. So in the Deep South, we grew up on all these street singers, which is a precursor to what we know now as country. Bessie Smith was of that genre. The singers of those days told stories, they'd sing about what was in the newspapers, unrequited love, what it was to be black then, or the Titanic sinking, or whatever. So it was similar. I look at it all as music of the 20th century. And the rappers of this generation have brought something else to the music.

McELFRESH: *What about your solo-drum pieces?*

ROACH: What got me interested was that while going to the Manhattan School of Music here, one of the things we had to do was go see the great masters perform. So I went to see [Andres] Segovia. And I saw him come on the stage at Carnegie Hall, by himself with his guitar, and he held the audience for a complete concert. [Art] Tatum was another person. I used to sit down and watch him, and I used to wonder if I could do that with just a drum set. My major in school was composition, it wasn't percussion. So that helps in the architecture and the building of a piece, in creating music and writing music. In the early '40s, I wrote a piece called "Drum Conversations," a piece for solo drums. And I performed that once on a concert with Charlie Parker, in California, developing and developing it until I could go onstage and do a concert by myself, with just the instrument itself.

In fact, I'll be doing that in February for the Silent Film Festival at the Museum of the Moving Image [in Astoria, Queens]. They used to have live musicians do the soundtracks for silent films. Well, I'm doing the soundtrack for Paul Robeson's first film, *Body And Soul*, by Oscar Micheaux, a black filmmaker and writer, because Spike Lee wasn't the first one. It's a great film. And I'm planning to use whistles, ratchets, pops, little percussive things. Just like Baby Dodds. I'll get a chance to use wood blocks and tempo blocks and all kinds of wonderful things to describe what's happening. So I'm going to have fun. I can't wait! **DB**

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HOW TO COMP By Marian McPartland

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

Marian McPartland was a frequent presence in the pages of DB Music Workshop.

RECENTLY, MY GROUP and I played a series of concerts for high schools in Huntington, Long Island, under the auspices of the Performing Arts Curriculum Enrichment. It is always a pleasure to perform for teenage audiences, and we were also able to meet many of the young people, discuss music with them, and listen to them perform in workshops and band rehearsals.

We (Jim Kappes, drums; Linc Milliman, bass; Ray Copeland, trumpet; and myself) played with them on several occasions, and were thus able to hear at first hand how many promising young musicians there are around and were made aware of their interest in jazz.

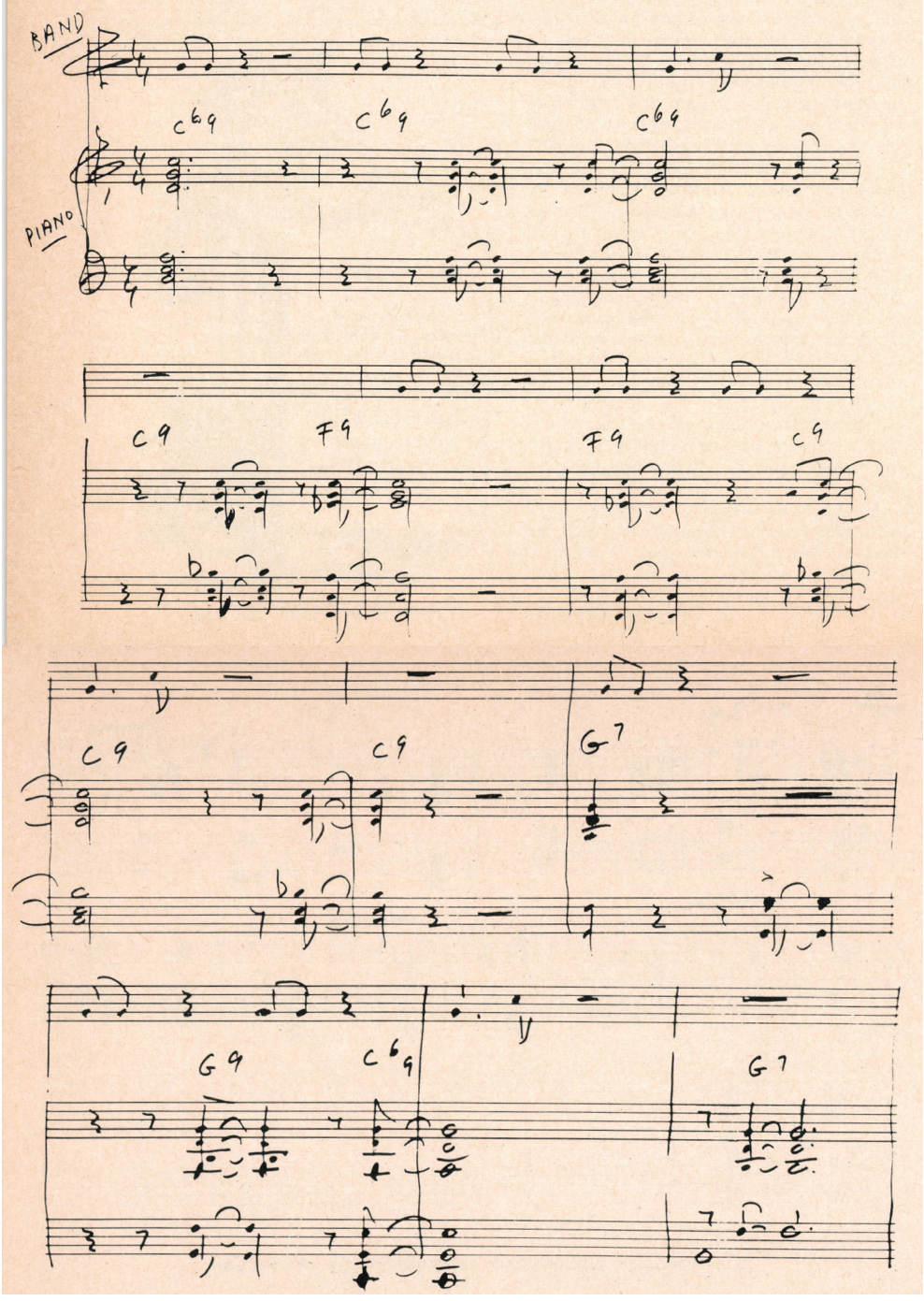
The other day, I heard a performance by the Cold Spring Harbour High School Band, and afterwards I got into a conversation with the pianist, Barbara McCracken, classically trained and a good musician, who obviously enjoys being in the band.

"It's so different from the way I'm used to playing," she told me, "though sometimes I'm not quite sure just what I'm supposed to play in certain places."

There must be many who have come into a band fresh from the discipline of classical training, only to find that instead of having to play exactly what is in front of you note for note, you are expected to be more adventurous in your interpretation of the chord symbols, both harmonically and rhythmically. Now you can decide on voicing the chord; you can choose the kind of rhythmic figures to use, tak-

Example 2

Example 3



ing the written part as more or less of a guide. In other words, you will be learning to "comp." (Jazz musicians have a way of abbreviating musical terminology to suit themselves, and the word "accompany" was neatly cut down to "comp" a long time ago.) Comping is what piano players do much of the time (unless they have their own group — then they can take all the solos!).

There are many different ways of voicing chords and playing interesting rhythmic patterns.

You must have listened to Count Basie's economical, well-placed chords, to Duke Ellington, to Nat Pierce with the Woody Herman Band, Hank Jones with Thad Jones and Mel Lewis — these are just a few of the great players who can inspire you. Each has developed a style, a unique way of doing things, and this, I think, is what every young player should strive for: to develop his or her own way.

Let's take a simple blues — "C Jam Blues" by Duke Ellington. The piano part may be written like Example 1 or Example 2. One way to voice the chords is as shown in Example 3. Even when sevenths and ninths are not written in the piano part, you can usually add them to make the chord sound more full. After playing the arrangement a few times you'll know what I mean (I hope!).

Don't be afraid to try different voicings, and always play with a firm, percussive touch (even if you're wrong, don't be wishy-washy!). I think the key word here is "listen" — to as much music as you can of all kinds: in-person performances whenever possible, records, radio, and TV. There is a lot of jazz on FM radio especially. Listen to what is going on around you in the band, to the other players, and most of all — listen to yourself. **DB**

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db music workshop

COURTESY NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

Gunther Schuller analyzed the vocal embellishments of "Empress of the Blues" Bessie Smith.

Bessie Smith by Gunther Schuller

THE FOLLOWING IS AN excerpt from the chapter on Bessie Smith in *Early Jazz*, by Gunther Schuller (Oxford University Press, 1968). The entire chapter is highly recommended to those seriously interested in Bessie Smith's work. "Jailhouse Blues" is included in the recently issued second volume of Columbia Records' complete Bessie Smith series.

As early as "Jailhouse Blues" (September 1923), we can hear the embellishment traits that form the essence of Bessie's style. In the first line after the scene-setting introduction, "Thirty days in jail with my back turned to the wall," the importance of the words in the sentence determines the degree of embellishment each receives. Almost every word is emphasized by an upward scoop or slide, but each one differently. The words "thirty," "jail" and "wall" — the three main words of the sentence — are also those most modified by slides.

"Thirty" starts with a relatively fast upward slur from approximately E flat to G flat. (The piece is in the key of E flat. All pitches are approximate, since Bessie moves fairly freely within the microtonal subdivisions of the scale.) "Days" slides more slowly from the blue flat-third to the major-third, G. The next word, "in," is a slightly flat G, in preparation for a large major-third upward scoop on "jail": the most important word, ergo the strongest embellishment.

These four elements are now reused, but with different words, of course, and in a different sequence: a flat G for "with," an E flat for "my," a minor-third slide on "back" (similar to "thirty") and a longer G-flat-to-G slur on the word "turned." In the sense that "with my" is similar to "in jail" — the only difference being that the final return to G in "jail" is not consummated on "my" — we have here a reshuffling of four degrees of slides from the initial order of 1, 2, 3, 4 to 3, 4, 1, 2. The next two words, "to the," transitional and less important, are appropriately unembellished G's, rhythmically short and connective.

So far, all embellishments have been upward slides. Now, on "wall," Bessie uses one of her other frequently employed ornamental devices, a double slide which at first descends to a final pitch. Here, in "Jailhouse Blues," because Bessie is heading for the tonic [the approximate sliding pitches are shown in Example A]. Bessie used two other variants of this embellishment. Another one, also on the tonic [Example B], was a quick downward dip to the sixth of the chord and up again. It is used, for example, on the word "wall" in the repeat of the first line of "Jailhouse Blues." But her most frequently used double-note ornament was reserved for the third of the chord [Example C]. This latter ornament appears with great consistency starting around 1925, and can be heard on any number of recordings: "Reckless Blues," "Sobbin' Hearted Blues," "Cold In Hand Blues" and many others.

On the word "wall" in the repeat line, we encounter another of Bessie's favorite devices, a phrase-ending drop-off or fall-off. It is usually associated with the tonic and drops quickly to the sixth of the scale [Example D]. But occasionally she did similar drop-offs on the third and even on the fifth of the key, as in "Cold In Hand Blues," where the fall-off drops to the third [Example E].

Two further phrase idiosyncrasies appear in "Jailhouse Blues." The one is a variant of the drop-off, longer and more pitch-inflected. We hear it here on the word "turned," an interpolated phrase repeating the last of the first line as a fill-in. (This two-bar fill-in would normally have been an instrumental response to the singer's first line, but since "Jailhouse Blues" was accompanied only by a pianist, Clarence Williams, Bessie occasionally decided to fill in the two bars herself.) On the word "turned" she sings the figure shown in Example F, thus turning the word into a blues moan. Here, although the pitches are still connected by slides, they are nevertheless more articulated than in her other ornaments so that an actual melodic motive emerges.

Bessie also had a unique ability to break phrases into unexpected segments and to breathe at such phrase interruptions, without in the slightest impairing overall continuity, textual or melodic. In the repeat of the "Thirty days" line, Bessie breathes twice at unexpected places: between the words "my" and "back" for a real break in the phrase; then again between "turned" and "to the wall," a smaller interruption. The reason for

these breath breaks is the previously mentioned interpolated half-phrase "turned to the wall," which prevented her from going to the end of the second repeat line without breathing. Thus the overall partitioning of both lines is as as follows (' is an incidental breath mark; * is a more pronounced interruption):

> Thirty days in jail' with my back
> turned' to the wall'
> Turned* to the wall/
> Thirty days in jail with my* back
> turned' to the wall.

Note that in the one place where one might have expected a breath, marked /, Bessie goes right on, bridging the natural division of the sentence.

One could cite hundreds of such examples in which word and melodic patterns are broken up in unexpected and often asymmetrical ways. It should suffice to cite one more, the fourth chorus of "Cold In Hand Blues" [see final Example]. Note the breath interruptions here, too, the first time after the word "myself," the second time in the middle of the word, yet without the slightest loss of continuity. (The trumpet responses are by Louis Armstrong.) **DB**

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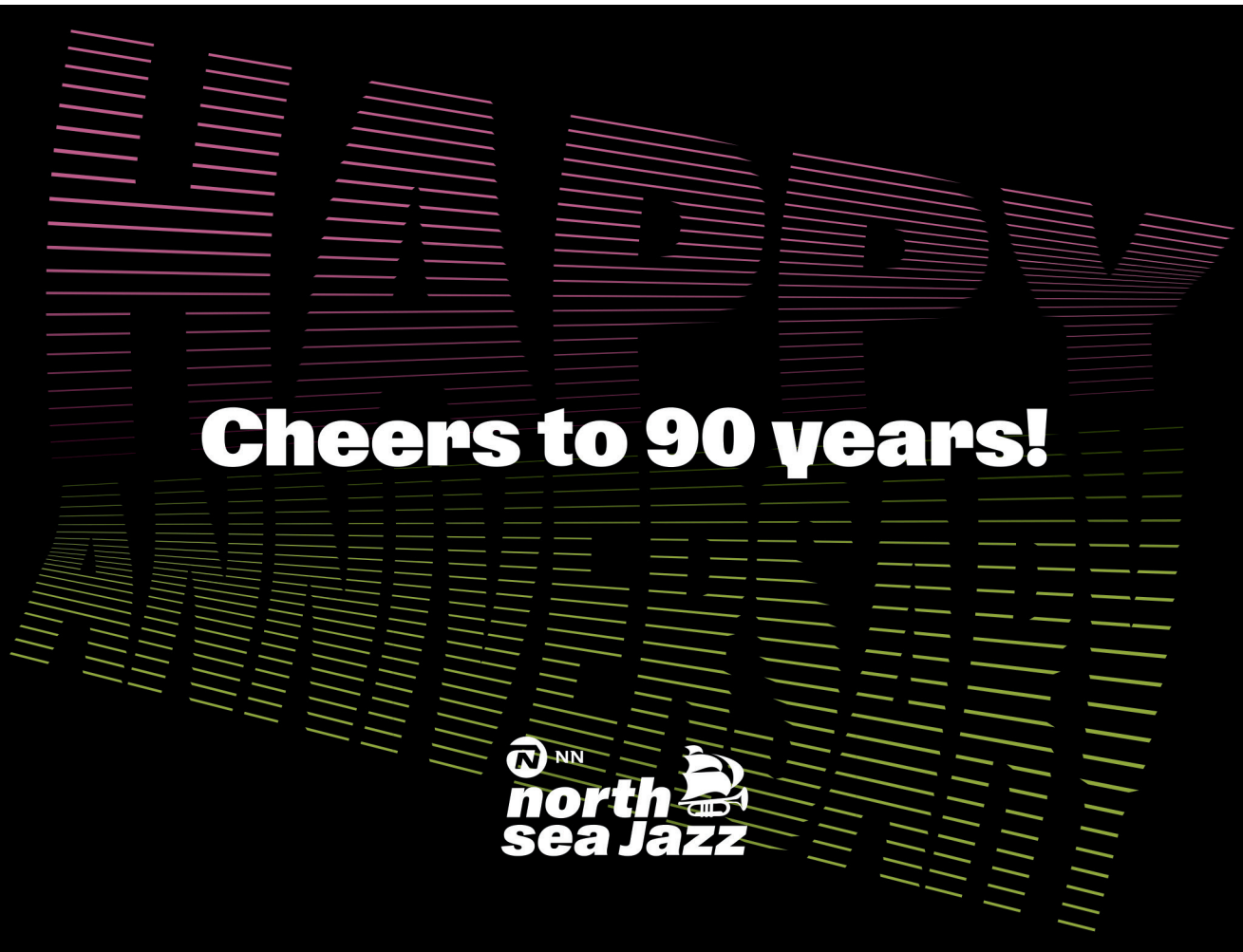
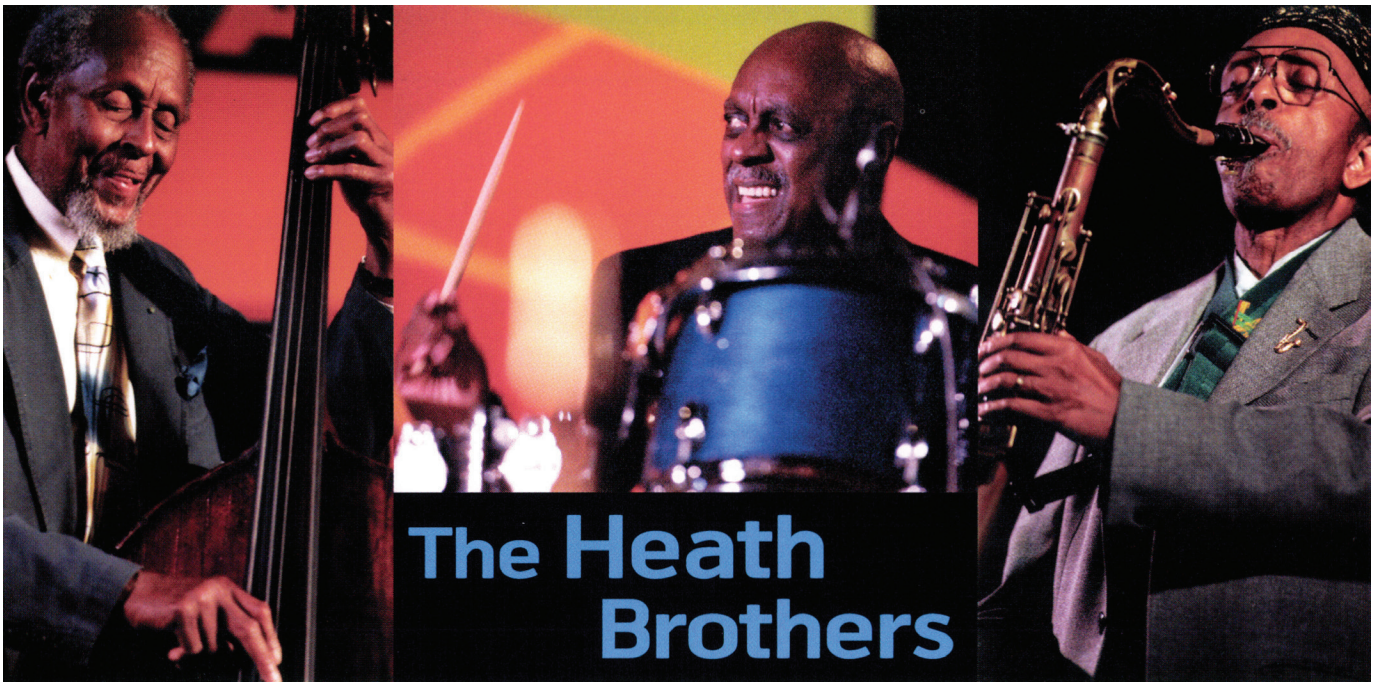


Blindfold Test

By Dan Ouellette

February 2003



MARS BRESLOW

Percy, Tootie and Jimmy Heath

EDITOR'S NOTE: In honor of the passing of Albert "Tootie" Heath on April 3, 2024, we close this special 90th Anniversary issue of DownBeat with one of the most entertaining Blindfold Tests in the magazine's history. Rest in Peace, Tootie.

Three's a crowd? Not when the Heath Brothers hang together. When the three (Percy, 79, Jimmy, 75, and Tootie, 67) took the stage at the live DownBeat "Blindfold Test" at last fall's Monterey Jazz Festival, they had the crowd in stitches with their wicked humor, highly opinionated observations and articulate critiques. But above all, the trio displayed a fraternal camaraderie as they enjoyed riffing with each other and thoroughly engaged the audience.

At the beginning of the session, Tootie quipped, "Percy's gonna mess around and get a television show out of this." If a scout had been in attendance, the Heaths would be starring in a second season replacement program right now.

John Lewis

"Lyonhead" (from *Kansas City Breaks*, Red Baron, 1992, recorded in 1982) Lewis, piano; Frank Wess, flute; Howard Collins, guitar; Joe Kennedy Jr., violin; Marc Johnson, bass: Shelly Manne, drums.

Tootie: *[immediately]* I hate it. Get that off. [*fakes snoring*] That's the Turtle Island String Quartet and some other guys [*laughs*]. [*when the piano swing part hits*] Ooh, yeah.

Jimmy: John Lewis, Percy Heath and the Modern Jazz Quartet.

Percy: That does sound a little Quartet-ish once they got going. That is John Lewis.

Tootie: That's Lewis. Is that Stephane [Grappelli]? I think they were all in Europe someplace and drunk when they made this.

Jimmy: Frank Wess, too. It's all right, but it took too long to get to the swing.

Percy: I wouldn't put this down. It's nice music. But it was too elaborate in the front.

Tootle: I hated it. It had no feel. Who's on bass?

Percy: It wasn't me. I wasn't there. That's Marc Johnson? That was John's boy back when he was the musical director of Monterey. Who's on drums? Is that you, Tootie?

Tootie: Oh, no. I made a lot of 'em that were nothing, but this wasn't one of 'em.

Stefon Harris & Jacky Terrasson

"My Foolish Heart" (from *Kindred*, Blue Note, 2001) Harris, marimbas; Terrasson, piano; Tarus Mateen, bass; Idris Muhammad, drums.

Tootie: It's Milt Johnson and Dave Blubleck [*laughs*].

Percy: It's Bobby [Hutcherson].

Tootie: These two guys can't decide whose solo it is.

Percy: That's called interplay.

Jimmy: Or counterpoint.

Tootie: This is awful. I hate it. Take it off!

Percy: People express themselves the way they see fit. It's a xylophone or marimba instead of vibes. That was interesting to combine with the piano. I'm not going to criticize a record I've never heard before. But I couldn't hear the drums in this mix. I wanted to hear more accents. And the bass player was like in a monotone. I wanted to hear more accents from him, too.

Jimmy: Is this Gary Burton? I can't identify these guys. They were doing collective improvisation, which goes back to Dixieland and New Orleans music, just modernized. But it's not my cup of tea.

Percy: Me neither, but I would listen to it.

Tootie: I wouldn't buy it or listen to it. And I wouldn't recommend it. I hated it. There was no groove in it. I'm a drummer. I like having a beat in the music. That's why I listen to hip-hop because they have a serious beat.

Jimmy: And it didn't have a melody. I'm a saxophonist and a single-note player, and

I like melody. You start off with the melody and then improvise off of that. This just started with the improvisation. That was Stefon Harris? Oh, yeah, I know him, but I don't like this tune.

Benny Goodman Quartet

"Say It Isn't So" (from *Together Again!*, Bluebird, 2002, recorded 1963) Goodman, clarinet; Teddy Wilson, piano; Lionel Hampton, vibes; Gene Krupa, drums.

Tootie: I love this, and I don't even know who it is.

Jimmy: And it's got a melody: "Say It Isn't So."

Tootie: From jump street, you can hear the beat. Hey, there's Lionel Hampton.

Jimmy: And Teddy Wilson. It's Benny Goodman and Lionel Hampton.

Tootie: Now, that's jazz. There's nobody with a doctorate in symphonic music playing here. This comes from here [*pats his chest*]. All those doctors are OK with me as long as they're the kind who are in the hospital.

Percy: These are the real guys. But I can't hear the drummer.

Jimmy: The drummer was miked down in those days. I knew all these guys from that generation. I like this because it puts you in a certain mood. It's romantic. You don't have to intellectualize this to understand it. You feel it.

Tootie: I like the song and the beat.

Percy: That was wonderful. I enjoyed it. I knew all those guys, too. I admired all of them. The Heath family grew up listening to music like this, so this was perfect for me.

Misha Mengelberg Quartet

"Hypochristmutreefuzz" (from *Four In One*, Songlines, 2001) Mengelberg, piano; Dave Douglas, trumpet; Brad Jones, bass; Han Bennink, drums, percussion.

Tootie: [The trumpeter] is at home practicing. This is right out of the book. This has a beat but it's too fast. You can't pat your foot to it, you can't dance to it, so what good is it?

Percy: I don't know, but that piano keeps going on and on and on.

Tootie: And the trumpet sounds like a mosquito. I sure hope these guys aren't in the audience because we're gonna get beat up once they hear what we have to say.

Percy: This guy could play the trumpet. But everyone who plays doesn't necessarily qualify as a jazz musician. You've got to convey some experience. Maybe he hasn't had much except in school. But as a musician matures, he knows what to leave out. You have all those notes to use, but you choose which ones to play to tell a little story.

Jimmy: Was that Dave Douglas? Yeah, he's the media wonder, the favorite. They rank him as being very special. But I find his playing to be emotionless. It's like Tootie said. This sounds like he's practicing exercises. But I'm spoiled because I remember Fats Navarro, Dizzy and Miles. They had technique, but they also had feeling and emotion. I hear Clark Terry play one note, and I know it's him. This guy played hundreds of notes and I didn't know who he was.

Illinois Jacquet

"Illinois Goes To Chicago" (from *Savoy 60th Anniversary – Timeless*, Savoy Jazz, 2002, recorded 1946) Jacquet, tenor saxophone; Emmett Berry, trumpet; Bill Doggett, piano; Freddie Green, guitar; John Simmons, bass; Shadow Wilson, drums.

All: Oh, oh.

Tootie: Now, those are our boys.

Percy: That's sweet. This is a good one.

Tootie: [*at the tenor solo*] That's better than sex right there.

Percy: Or good accompaniment.

Jimmy: Sounds like the Beast, Illinois Jacquet. [*at the trumpet solo*] And that sounds like Sweets.

Tootie: No, it's Russell Jacquet, No? It's Emmett Berry?

Jimmy: I never heard this. But I knew who it was right off. It swings and has a nice melody. Illinois Jacquet has always been one of my favorite saxophonists. I like his breath control, the way he sings and sustains notes. He has a beautiful sound and he's always in tune. He's a great saxophone player. I heard him just a few weeks ago playing at a dance at Lincoln Center. He was sitting down when he was playing, but man, could he play.

Von Freeman

"If I Should Lose You" (from *The Improvisor*, Premonition, 2002) Freeman, tenor saxophone.

Jimmy: [*after a few guesses*] It's Von Freeman? He's got 80 years of experience and expression that he gave in that one song. I like this so much. I like his tone, his expression. He took some liberties that a younger player would take. Von is free of the chords. He's been in Chicago for all these years, back there with Gene Ammons. He has that warm tenor saxophone sound. To play this song as complete as he did without accompaniment is quite a challenge. I'd give him tops.

Percy: It was beautiful. The first few notes sounded Hawk-ish to me with the big tone. But some of his notes and the way he played chords was not Coleman. Von is talented. So is his whole family.

Tootie: This definitely had a beat. I could feel it. And I could identify with the melody. His sound was warm and wonderful. He fooled me because I thought he was a younger guy as he did some things that the younger kids are doing today, like playing outside the chords, the melody and the key. The name of the tune is "If I Should Lose You" and it sounded like he was losing it on purpose there for a minute.

Percy: But he found it again. **DB**

> ***'He has that warm tenor saxophone sound. To play this song as complete as he did without accompaniment is quite a challenge. I'd give him tops.'*** **—Jimmy Heath on Von Freeman**

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

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-**Jody Espina**
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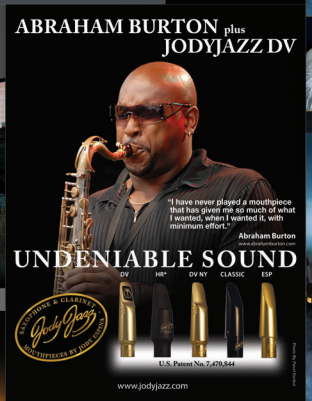

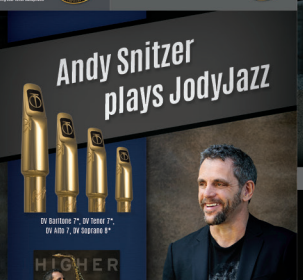

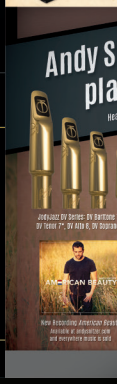

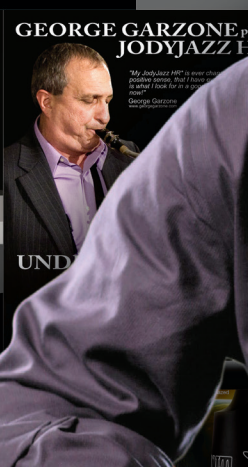

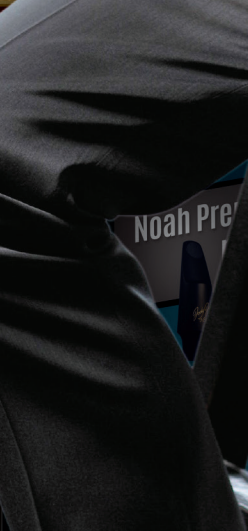

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